



Permanent Mission
of Barbados to
the United Nations



STATEMENT BY

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Mr. President,

It is my pleasure to join with the preceding speakers in congratulating you on your election to preside over the 59th Session of the General Assembly. Barbados pledges its fullest cooperation in the year ahead.

I wish to thank and congratulate your predecessor, His Excellency, Mr. Julian Hunte, for his effective leadership of the 58th Regular Session of the General Assembly. Barbados was particularly pleased at the election of a representative of a small island Caribbean state to this high office in the United Nations, and President Hunte's outstanding performance is testimony to the critical and effective role that small islands can play in the multilateral process. His guidance of the work to revitalize this Assembly is particularly noteworthy.

Mr. President,

This Organization has been accused of being out of touch, or worse, irrelevant to the changing world in which we live despite its valiant efforts in recent years to promote development, restore peace and maintain security in many parts of the world. In these circumstances it is incumbent upon all Member States to reaffirm their commitment to, and support for the multilateral process, using the United Nations as its primary vehicle. At the same time, there must be a constant process of review, reform and renewal of the Organization so that it can remain relevant to the continuously changing international climate.

Furthermore, it is essential that political will be brought to bear on the seemingly intractable issue of reform of the Security Council. Barbados continues to be of the view that the Council must be made more representative of today's membership of the United Nations, as well as more transparent in its working methods and more democratic in its decision-making. The Security Council must earn the support and confidence of all members of the United Nations if it is to fulfill its important mandate in an increasingly volatile and insecure international environment.

Mr. President,

We must also recognize that reform cannot be kept merely within the confines of the United Nations. It must be accompanied by renewal of the wider international governance architecture. It strikes developing nations as deeply unjust and hypocritical that calls for democratization and good governance in the developing world are not accompanied by calls for these values to be reflected in the multilateral organizations by which so many are governed and upon which so many depend.

Enhancing the voice and participation of developing countries in international dialogue and decision-making is a fundamental prerequisite for improving global economic governance. Debate on reform of the international financial architecture

should not continue to be restricted to the hallowed halls and boardrooms of the Bretton Woods Institutions, but should also find a prominent place on the United Nations agenda. We all have a stake in the global economic system and its management. This highly complex and increasingly globalized and interconnected world demands a radically reformed system of global economic and financial governance that promotes equitable development.

Mr. President,

A majority of states of this Organization, both developing and developed, has expressed the urgent need for a transparent, open, democratic and inclusive dialogue between sovereign states on international cooperation in tax matters, under the universal ambit of the United Nations. The persistence of exclusive and restricted membership organizations, such as the OECD, that dictate norms and standards in international tax cooperation in lieu of an inclusive intergovernmental forum, is untenable.

While we are encouraged by the progress in the debate within the Economic and Social Council to convert the Ad Hoc Group of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters into a Committee of that body, with a new and expanded mandate, we still await a final positive decision on the matter. We consider such a decision to be an important first step towards the creation of an international forum to promote and strengthen cooperation in tax matters.

Mr. President,

Barbados recognizes the critical need for the Doha Development Round negotiations to be revived with a developmental focus, and welcomes the decision on the Doha Work Programme reached by the World Trade Organization on August 1st. The concessions to Least Developed Countries evident in this framework agreement are laudable. But while it would appear that developed country benefits remain substantially secure, the framework severely limits the ability of small middle-income developing countries to realise the reasonable benefits expected and necessary to advance their development interests.

Trade is a significant factor in the sustainable development challenge, and trade rules need to take into account the vulnerabilities and the development needs of small states. It is true that developed and advanced developing country partners may experience some developmental challenges similar to those of small states. However, it is the inability of the small economies to respond satisfactorily to externally imposed shocks which makes them particularly vulnerable.

Barbados appeals to all WTO members to support the mandate given at Doha to examine issues related to the trade of small economies and to frame action oriented responses to those issues in order to facilitate "the fuller integration of small, vulnerable economies into the multilateral trading system."

Mr. President,

In respect of small island economies, some of the greatest development threats are those from natural disasters of every kind including floods, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, and especially hurricanes. Indeed, Hurricane Ivan in the course of a few hours devastated the island of Grenada. An economy has disappeared. For many Caribbean countries this cycle of destruction is repeated year after year, and, on occasion, several times in the same year. Some of us are constantly repairing and replacing infrastructure, replanting crops and rebuilding our very lives.

When a hurricane hurts one or more big cities or states in the United States, resources are immediately re-directed to help those affected. An entire state or city has never been eradicated. But this is precisely what Grenada experienced just three weeks ago. Can you begin to imagine, Mr. President, the implications when a small state is reduced to rubble in less than a day? Terrorists could hardly do a more effective job. Yet these factors are never taken into account when GDP is computed.

In response to this devastation, CARICOM Heads of Government met in Emergency Session and developed a priority programme for the rehabilitation of Grenada, Carriacou and Petit Martinique. Barbados for its part has already contributed substantially to the relief effort. But the reality is that CARICOM by itself does not have the financial resources to cope. We call for an international donor conference to help Grenada.

To highlight Grenada, however, is not to overlook the damage done by Hurricanes Charley, Frances, Ivan and Jeanne to the Bahamas, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Tobago, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Jamaica, the Cayman Islands, Cuba, Barbados and including the United States, all in the course of the past few weeks.

Catastrophic events such as these, Mr. President, directly affect the ability of many small vulnerable developing countries to fully implement the Millennium Development Goals and should be taken into account by this Assembly as it lays the groundwork for the 2005 Review. Attaining these goals remains paramount. Barbados reaffirms its commitment to their achievement, and urges all states to honour the spirit and intent of the Millennium Declaration.

Mr. President,

The dominant view in some parts of the world is that the most serious threats to international peace and security are the more recent virulent forms of terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and non-conventional weapons, and the spread of transnational criminal networks. For many others around the globe, however, particularly in the developing world, poverty, the spread of HIV/AIDS and other diseases, natural disasters, civil strife and other social, economic and environmental concerns remain the highest priority.

Mr. President,

It is of the utmost importance that the international community strive to achieve unity of purpose in confronting these diverse security threats and challenges based on a common multidimensional security agenda. As recently articulated by the Secretary-General: " The global security agenda should reflect a global consensus on the major threats to peace and security, be they old or new, "hard or soft", and on our common response." It is in this connection that we eagerly await his report on the work of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. Member states must stand ready to make the necessary bold and drastic reforms of the current multilateral rules and institutions that govern international peace and security.

Mr. President

For Small Island Developing States, like Barbados, this wider multidimensional nature of threats to international peace and security is particularly important. In addition to the impact of natural disasters to which I have already referred, the transshipment of nuclear waste through the Caribbean Sea, global warming and water pollution all threaten our very existence as a nation. For us, challenges to our sustainable development represent the more serious threats to our security.

In this regard we place great emphasis on the 10-year review of the Barbados Programme of Action to take place in Mauritius next year, since it will present the international community with an opportunity to examine past successes and future challenges that face SIDS.

It is significant to note that SIDS themselves have already implemented close to 70% of the Barbados Programme of Action. We trust that the Mauritius meeting will provide our developed country partners with the opportunity to deliver on their past, present and future commitments.

Implicit in the proposal first submitted to the General Assembly in 1999 to designate the Caribbean Sea as a Special Area within the context of sustainable development, is the recognition of the marine environment as our most precious natural resource and one of central social, economic and political significance to the Caribbean reality. Its protection and preservation remain a major priority of the region.

This year the General Assembly will return to this issue. It remains the ultimate goal of the region to have the Caribbean Sea recognized as a Special Area within the context of sustainable development, and we look forward to continued assistance from the international community in helping us to achieve this objective.

Mr. President,

Let me now turn to those issues of particular relevance to Barbados and to the Caribbean. Barbados finds it to be an irony of tragic proportions that in the

bicentennial year of Haiti's liberation from colonial control, this pioneer of independence has been plunged once again into crisis. While the events surrounding the abrupt departure of President Aristide remain a matter of deep concern, particularly as they pertain to the constitutionality of the removal of democratically elected leaders, Barbados is committed to assisting the people of Haiti in the process of normalization, in the search for a peaceful solution to the political crisis, in the strengthening of democratic governance in the country, and in the provision of humanitarian assistance.

Barbados is convinced that full engagement with the Interim Government of Haiti best serves the interests of the Haitian people and reflects our stated desire to accompany them at this most difficult time in their history. This is a task from which we must not shirk. Let there be no doubt, we expect the Interim Administration to uphold the highest standards set by the Charter of Civil Society of the Caribbean Community and to fulfill its commitment as regarding the rule of law, equal justice for all, democracy and good governance. We look forward to full implementation of OAS resolution 2058 on the strengthening of democracy in Haiti, as well as the holding of municipal, national and presidential elections in 2005 as promised. In this regard, Barbados intends to play its part in the international efforts to assist Haiti to put the electoral process in place.

Barbados is hopeful that CARICOM will be able to play a key role in assisting Haiti through the Security Council mandated Mission, MINUSTAH. In this regard the CARICOM Special Envoy, supported by a Task Force, has begun work to coordinate assistance to Haiti in areas where the countries of the region have recognized capacity.

Over the past week, we would all have been made aware of the perilous situation confronting our brothers and sisters in Haiti as a result of the devastation caused by Tropical Storm Jeanne. Haiti is part of our CARICOM family. It is our duty to galvanize all our energies to assist in mitigating the plight of the Haitian people.

Two days ago, the Prime Minister of Barbados the Right Honourable Owen Arthur announced that the Government will provide technical assistance as well as an initial contribution of one million Barbados dollars to the Interim Administration for the purpose of providing humanitarian assistance to the people of Haiti in the wake of hurricane Jeanne.

Mr. President,

The issue of Cuba's isolation within the hemisphere is also of concern to Barbados. We embrace Cuba as a bona fide sister-state in the Caribbean region and are committed to a policy of constructive engagement with its government and people. We do not believe that efforts to isolate Cuba, through exclusion from participation in hemispheric bodies like the OAS or the emerging Free Trade Area of the

Americas (FTAA), or measures that create greater hardship for the Cuban people, such as a fifty-year long economic embargo, will foster change in Cuba.

Barbados, indeed the entire Caribbean Community, in its engagement with Cuba, has held close to the principles enshrined in the CARICOM Charter of Civil Society. We cannot accept a "regime change" exogenously imposed upon the people of Cuba, to be, in any way, a viable option.

The Government of Barbados has long enjoyed a warm relationship with its Caribbean neighbour, Venezuela, and has been deeply concerned by the political crisis in that country. We are satisfied that the recent referendum has been safely and successfully completed. We now look forward to a period of calm in which the process of healing and dialogue, necessary for better understanding between competing groups can occur. Venezuela needs all of its people working together if it is to move forward and continue to be a leading engine of development in the hemisphere and the beacon of democracy which its founding father intended. It behooves all who cherish democracy to do what we can to give Venezuelans that opportunity.

This year the world commemorates the struggle against slavery and its abolition, with the goal of deepening the knowledge of slavery and the slave trade, and highlighting its philosophical, political and legal legacies. As the first landfall out of the Atlantic, Barbados was the recipient of a large number of African slaves, leading to a major imprint of African cultures on the formation of the Barbadian society. This coincidence of history not only creates a unique fraternal bond that characterizes the relationship between the Caribbean and Africa, but also serves to make us uniquely aware of the interactions that the slave trade generated throughout the world between the different peoples involved.

Barbados supports the call of the Director-General of UNESCO for all peoples to eradicate, through their actions, the vestiges of slavery and to combat all new forms of servitude that represent intolerable violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Indeed Barbados asserts that international peace and security can best be achieved through the building of tolerance based on recognition of cultural, racial and religious diversity.

Mr. President,

This fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly has before it a number of issues, which have the potential to reshape the nature and direction of international relations for many years to come. Barbados intends to play an active role in its deliberations.

I thank you.