

Mr. President, I am pleased to salute you and offer you the congratulations of my government and the delegation of Barbados on your election as President of this 66<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly. Those of us who are familiar with the very high standards to which you routinely subscribe, confidently expect that you will steer the deliberations of this session with your accustomed calm and skill.

It is appropriate that I commend, also, your predecessor in office H.E. Dr. Joseph Deiss for the aplomb with which he guided the deliberations of the 65<sup>th</sup> Session of this Assembly.

I am pleased also to congratulate His Excellency, Mr. Ban Ki-Moon, on his re-election as Secretary-General of the United Nations. I acknowledge the sterling work he has done over the past 5 years and wish him a successful second term.

Mr. President, I am especially delighted to extend congratulations to the government and people of the Republic of South Sudan on their achievement of independence. On behalf of the government and people of Barbados, I reiterate our support and solidarity on South Sudan's admission to the United Nations as its 193<sup>rd</sup> member state.

It is with genuine pleasure, Mr. President, that I address you today, in my capacity as the Prime Minister of Barbados. The untimely death eleven months ago of my predecessor in office placed on my shoulders the primary responsibility of pursuing those ideals to which Barbados is committed both at home and abroad.

Some forty-five years ago, our first Prime Minister, in his maiden address to this Assembly articulated our position in the following terms: *"The people of Barbados do not draw a dividing line between their internal affairs and their foreign policy. They strive in their domestic arrangements to create a just society for themselves. In their Constitution they affirm respect for the rule of law; they also declare their intention to establish and*

*maintain the kind of society which enables each citizen to the full extent of his capacity, to play his part in national life.....In thus charting our domestic course, we can have no interest in a foreign policy which contradicts our national goals.....we are exponents not of the diplomacy of power, but of the diplomacy of peace and prosperity."*

Much, of course, has changed since then. The world we know today is vastly different from the world of 1966. Yet we continue to keep faith with the vision of the father of our independence. My task is addressing you on matters of foreign policy therefore is, paradoxically, at once easy and difficult. Easy, because we still adhere to our foundational principles; difficult, because we now have to apply them in a world that has grown much more complex, much more volatile and much more dangerous.

Mr. President, if we need further proof that we live in an interconnected world, the present economic downturn provides a painful reminder. When large economies like

those of the United States and Europe are reeling, you may well imagine the toll the worst crisis since the Great Depression is taking on small vulnerable societies like those that populate the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean.

We in Barbados have chosen to withstand the economic storms that assail us by relying on the good judgement of our people to come together in times of peril. My government has partnered with the business community and the trade union movement to ensure that both lay-offs and wage demands are kept to an absolute minimum so that the gain and the pain are shared equitably. We are committed to protecting the most vulnerable among us, because it is our settled conviction that a nation is more than just an economy, it is also a society.

The cruel irony of the current downturn is that it might have been avoided if corporations had restrained their greed, and government oversight and regulation, at the international, regional and national levels had been more vigorous and more rigorous.

This highlights the urgent need for a new architecture of global finance that will render unlikely the prospect of our lurching from one crisis to another, and lay the ground work for a smooth and balanced economic recovery that avoids the massive social dislocations which we are now witnessing. Recovery that comes at the expense of the poorest and most vulnerable in our societies is not only unenlightened economics but also very dangerous politics.

Mr. President, we in Barbados have welcomed the rise of the global economy in the past two decades, since it has the potential for creating prosperity for all nations. But it will only realise its potential if the increasingly volatile flows of international capital are governed by fair and transparent rules. In laying down an orderly framework for global financial and economic transactions we urge that the international community apply the principle enunciated by Aristotle upwards of two thousand years ago: *Equality between equals and proportionality between unequals.*

Barbados believes that the path to prosperity lies in open economies, open societies, and open governments, and is constantly positioning itself to compete as a fully compliant, transparent, rules-governed global entrepreneurial and financial centre.

Yet, to our dismay we find that the rich and powerful keep changing the rules to their advantage and to our disadvantage. It is a violation both of fair play and of commonsense to move the goal posts while the game is in progress. Let it be clearly understood that on this issue it is not charity we seek; it is justice we demand.

But, Mr. President, none of the nations represented in this assembly will enjoy sustainable prosperity if we continue to abuse the environment which we hold in sacred trust for future generations. It is an inconvenient truth that the success of humanity's development goals depends on the ability of our planet to sustain our consumption and production practices. We must be cautious, therefore, about how

we use fossil fuels, about carbon emission levels and about the unregulated treatment of waste. The planet has now begun to protest through dramatic changes in climate and the prospect of sea-level rise. The very existence of small island states like those in the Caribbean and the Pacific could be imperilled if current trends are not halted or reversed.

Barbados has been an active participant in the environmental movement since the Rio Conference of 1992. We are proud to have hosted the first Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island States in 1994 and continue to work with other Small Island Developing States to update and improve the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy for its further Implementation. We continue to work, also, towards the success of the RIO + 20 Conference on Sustainable Development.

Mr. President, I am deeply honoured to have been asked to serve on the Secretary-General's High Level Panel on Global Sustainability. That our task is challenging no one will deny, required as we are to formulate a blueprint for economic growth and prosperity that focuses on the eradication of poverty, while ensuring greater equality and inclusion, and reducing the devastating impact of human activities on ecosystems and the environment. The work of the panel is progressing smoothly and I assure you that my distinguished colleagues and I have readily accepted the challenge.

Mr. President, without peace and security it is difficult to create and maintain the social conditions that constitute an indispensable prerequisite for economic progress and prosperity.

The protracted conflict in the Middle East between Israel and the Palestinians has become a disturbing anomaly in a world where so many other disputes have been peacefully resolved. It is an anomaly because everyone knows what the solution is. It is disturbing because the only thing preventing a resolution of the issue is an unhappy convergence of dysfunctional political currents at the domestic level.

The State of Israel has a right to exist and the people of Israel have a right to live in security and to do so with the full and undisputed recognition of the rest of the world. On the other hand, the Palestinians are entitled also to enjoy the fruits of prosperity within their own sovereign state. Much else in this conflict may be negotiable. Surely, those two postulates are not. The Holy Land has for centuries been the locus of humanity's hopes. It is high time that it now become a symbol, not of humanity's divisions, but of humanity's unity. This state of affairs will ensue only when the disgracefully long wait of the Palestinians for a homeland is brought to an end.

In similar vein, Mr. President, the Government and people of Barbados fully embrace Cuba as an important partner in the Caribbean region and, ever since 1972, committed themselves to a policy of constructive engagement with its government and people. Barbados respects the sovereign rights of Cuba and supports, unequivocally, its full integration into our hemisphere. Barbados does not believe

that actions, such as the decades long economic embargo, aimed at isolating Cuba, or any other measures that create greater hardship for the Cuban people, will facilitate the full integration which we consider to be both desirable and necessary. My delegation thinks, therefore, that the economic embargo against Cuba has long outlived its usefulness and should be lifted.

Barbados remains committed also to supporting the development and the advancement of the people of Haiti. For my delegation, the reconstruction of Haiti, including the rebuilding of its democratic institutions continues to be a high priority. We fully support the call made in July by the Heads of State and Government of the Caribbean Community for the international community to fulfil their pledges to finance the reconstruction of Haiti, following the devastation of the earthquake in January 2010.

Mr. President, terrorism, whether emanating from states or from non-state actors, is an attack on what we have always known to be the core values of this organisation. I speak of the rule of law; the protection of civilians; mutual respect between people of different faiths and cultures; and peaceful resolution of conflict.

So it is the view of my delegation that the UN must be the foremost form of collective security against terrorism, convinced as we are that while terrorism may arise out of conditions of insecurity and deprivation, it should never be accepted or justified in the pursuit of any cause whatsoever.

Barbados continues therefore, to be an active and committed partner in global efforts to combat terrorism and other transnational criminal activities. We have experienced first-hand the deleterious effects on our societies of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. At their Summit in July 2011, CARICOM Heads of Government committed themselves "to accord the highest national and regional priority to combatting and eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and their ammunition".

We have a vested interest, therefore, in the success of the United Nations Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty (UNCATT) in 2012. We will continue to work with other Member States to achieve the ultimate objective of a legally binding, robust and comprehensive Arms Trade Treaty which imposes the highest possible standards for the transfer of conventional arms, including small arms, light weapons and ammunitions.

Mr. President, much has changed since the formation of the United Nations in 1945. Some of the global challenges we face today like the pandemics of HIV/AIDS and non-communicable diseases, climate change, the growth of the illicit drug trade, transnational crime, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction are new. Others like extreme poverty, genocide, terrorism and civil conflict are old.

Yet the need for a United Nations Organization remains as pressing today as it was at the time of its formation. While the United Nations is an organization of sovereign states, it exists to serve the needs of all the peoples of the world.

We need to be constantly reminded, therefore, that even if he can vote to choose his government, a young man living with AIDS who faces daily discrimination is not truly free.

Even if she earns a comfortable living, a woman who lives in fear of daily violence and has no say in how her country is run is not truly free.

Even if he enjoys freedom of speech and assembly, a young man dying of hunger is not truly free.

Freedom to live in dignity, freedom from fear, and freedom from want are inextricably connected. Indeed, all people wherever they can be found have the right to security and to development.

As member states, we must re-commit ourselves, therefore, to realising the ideals of this organisation, bearing in mind that commitment to the pragmatic and the possible must sometimes become our stepping stones to the realisation of ideal.

That approach, Barbados is convinced, is an infallible way of giving effect to the determination of the founders of the United Nations, "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war" and "to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom."

I thank you, Mr. President.