



**Commonwealth of  
DOMINICA**

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**Statement**

**by**

**Honourable Roosevelt Skerrit  
Prime Minister**

**of the**

**Commonwealth of Dominica**

**to the**

**59<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations  
General Assembly**

**Friday, September 24, 2004  
United Nations Headquarters, New York**

**President of the General Assembly, Mr. Jean Ping**  
**Secretary-General of the UN, Mr. Kofi Annan**  
**Your Excellencies,**  
**Ladies and Gentlemen:**

Allow me first of all to congratulate you, Mr. President, for assuming the mantle of the Presidency of the 59<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly. My delegation wishes to assure you of its full support and cooperation towards a successful outcome of this session.

My Government expresses its deepest appreciation to your predecessor, His Excellency, Mr. Julian Hunte, for the outstanding manner in which he presided over the work of the 58<sup>th</sup> Session. Under his visionary leadership significant progress was made in advancing the revitalization of the General Assembly and in ensuring the return of development to the forefront of issues in this Assembly.

No words of praise would be adequate to describe the yeoman task undertaken by the Secretary General, Mr. Kofi Annan.

**Mr. President,**

In an international environment of turmoil and in a world going through the turbulence of economic reconstruction, as globalization proceeds, the Secretary General has remained a calm, clear and moderating influence on parties to all conflict. His levelheaded approach has done much to ensure the relevance of the United Nations, which the people of the Commonwealth of Dominica cherish highly.

The numerous challenges facing the globalised world demand a common endeavor from all nations of the world. The guarantee of human rights, peace and security and ensuring social and economic justice for all require international cooperation and concerted multilateral action.

Dominica is of the firm conviction that the United Nations continues to be the global institution most suited to the pursuit and coordination of these global initiatives. Multilateral institutions need however to be reformed if they are going to be relevant in the current global dispensation.

The coordination of the UN effort in harmony with national efforts must be the focus of institution if it is to positively impact on the lives of the majority of vulnerable and marginalize people in the world.

**Mr. President,**

Dominica is a small island state with all of the strengths as well as the weaknesses of such small economies, and that is why we look to the United Nations as the forum in which small countries can ventilate their views and collectively influence the agenda of this organization in some way.

The central question for all countries in the world today is the kind of arrangements that will constitute the economic order when the globalisation process is complete. Globalisation at this stage consists of a wide variety of treaties, some bilateral and others multilateral. Out of this welter of agreement so far, there is yet to be discerned a clear set of principles that address the idiosyncratic features of small island states when they function as economic units.

**Mr. President,**

The economy of my country within the last six years has had to withstand shocks, which are the bi-products of multilateral treaties in which states similarly situated as my country have had only a miniscule input.

A dispute between the United States of America and the European Union resulted in a ruling by the World Trade Organization that destroyed the banana industry, which was the backbone of the economy of Dominica.

A subsequent decision by the OECD to publish what has been described as a "blacklist" had a very adverse impact upon the offshore banking sector in my country.

Dominica would make a plea for greater transparency and inclusiveness in the formulation of agreements, which relate to development financing, trade and international tax matters. Participation ought to be substantive and not a mere formality, which is more often than not, the case. We do not subscribe to the notion that mere presence constitutes significant participation.

**Mr. President,** the two aforementioned shocks therefore, notwithstanding our participation in multilateral institutions, were exogenous, originating outside of our country and having nothing to do with the internal economic management of Dominica.

A resolute commitment on the part of the resilient population of Dominica, with the timely help of some friendly countries and institutions, saved our country from total disaster.

The lesson, which is abundantly clear to my country and other small states, is that a new global economic order must be balanced and sensitive to the interests of its weakest members.

The situation of Small Island Developing States will be the focus of attention in January 2005 when the International Meeting on the comprehensive review of the Barbados Programme of action convenes in Mauritius. This Barbados +10 Meeting will afford us the opportunity to make a full assessment of the Programme of Action and to evaluate its successes and shortcomings.

Dominica and all other Small Island Developing States attach great importance to this International Meeting and hope that it will galvanize greater commitment from the International Community towards provision of additional resources critical for advancing the implementation obligations of the next phase of the Plan of Action.

**Mr. President,**

My country is alarmed at the rise of terrorism in the world. Indeed as we move toward a more united world where people of different races and colors are called upon to pay higher standards of respect and tolerance for each other, violent solutions are counter productive and have unintended consequences of harming mere bystanders.

The brutal and bloody act of September 11, 2001 committed in New York City, not only had reverberations on the relatives, friends and the society in which the brutal murders were executed, but also had serious repercussions of an economic nature in places quite distant from the scene of the crime.

This notorious event had a most deleterious effect upon the Dominican economy. It drastically contracted our tourist industry and to date our tourism is yet to recover fully.

The focus on terrorism and the costs of complying with the requirements to prevent terrorist attacks in a region that is renowned as a zone of peace, are challenging our commitment to social and economic development.

Every cent spent on addressing this threat is a cent taken from our campaign to sustain the fight against trafficking in narcotic drugs and human beings, the pandemic of HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases, and degradation of our common environment. Water security, food security, energy security, and health security are other important goals that stand to suffer if additional resources are not found to pursue them.

Conflicts in various parts of the world are consuming scarce resources critically needed for development and poverty alleviation. On the African continent, civil conflicts in Sudan, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo are contributing to catastrophic consequences on the lives of large numbers of people. The continuing attention and support of the international community remain important prerequisites in the pursuit of efforts towards conflict resolution.

The Government of Dominica urges an immediate end to violence as a solution among people of our planet and calls for a higher level of rationality to be employed as we address the very thorny problems of today's life.

We are satisfied that this level of rationality that we are invoking can solve many problems that have been in existence for generations. No one prior to the abolition of apartheid in South Africa would have believed that after years of bloodshed between the races that a post apartheid political order could have accommodated dialogue between the races in that country.

The South African example indicates that where persons of goodwill and intellect get together our problems can be resolved without recourse to terror and violence. The United Nations has demonstrated capacity to trigger peaceful resolution of conflicts in the past and my government is persuaded that it can continue to do so if permitted.

**Mr. President,**

I have the great honor to be the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Dominica at the age of 32 years. We in Dominica subscribe to the view that the young people of any country are its best hope for a brighter future achieved through constructive change. My presence here attests to the commitment of the Dominican nation to treat younger generations not as inexperienced know-nothings, but as people with the potential to excel and to whom we must provide the best tools to ensure quality leadership.

We believe that the early exposure of young people to leadership and positions of responsibility would help to accelerate the process for achieving the goal of a world without prejudice.

**Mr. President,**

I have sought to summarize those issues that are of special concern to small, vulnerable states such as Dominica and others in the Caribbean. In this regard, I cannot overstate the importance of this Assembly taking cognizance of some unique features of island life, particularly in the tropics.

As you are aware Mr. President, at this time of the year, small island states in the Caribbean and parts of the North American continent are exposed to the threat of devastating hurricanes.

This year major disasters have occurred in several islands. Unspeakable devastation has taken place in Grenada, Jamaica has suffered substantial loss of life and damage to property, parts of Cayman Islands were submerged and a horrendous death toll

has been experienced in Haiti and the Dominican Republic. In the United States of America, the state of Florida has experienced disaster of immense proportions.

The recent experience of natural disasters underscores the importance of the necessity to put in place certain rehabilitation programmes, which would enable destroyed economies to be revived in the minimum of time.

The Government of Dominica believes that an insurance fund should be set up under the aegis of the United Nations.

States that are at risk for natural disasters that devastate their economies, ought to be able to access insurance payments to rehabilitate their economies damaged by such natural disasters.

Participation in such an insurance scheme should not be charitable. Each member state should be required to pay a premium that is affordable for that country and which can be used to repair the damage done to the economy, especially in cases where the productive sector of a country's economy has been reduced to paralysis.

**Mr. President,**

Developments over the last year have underscored that peace and security in the world, social progress, and economic prosperity require a consensus of member states, the strict implementation of universal norms, and commitment to multilateral action.

In this regard, the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) deserves the support of all member states, especially of those in the Latin America/Caribbean Region. My Government has made an important decision to support the humanitarian efforts to bring stability to the people of Haiti. We remain convinced that only the full implementation of the provisions of Security Council Resolution 1542 will lead to the return of democratic governance in Haiti.

Consistent with this overriding principle of pursuing universal consensus, together with our own national developmental goals, Dominica chose in March 2004 to conform to UN General Assembly Resolution 2758 of 1971 by establishing diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China (PRC), thereby honoring the One China Policy.

Dominica lauds the hand of friendship extended and the demonstrated commitment of the PRC to assisting small developing countries, hard pressed to fulfill their social and economic agendas, in light of the adverse impact of the still evolving new global world order on their economies.

**Mr. President,**

In the Caribbean region, as well as other regions of the world, we are witnessing the devastating impact of the proliferation of small arms. As a consequence, crime rates are increasing and civil conflicts are on the upsurge, which threaten the stability and security of developing countries such as mine.

We therefore call for early conclusion of the negotiations of a legally binding international instrument to control the indiscriminate supply of small arms and light weapons to non-state actors.

**Mr. President,**

Dominica commends the United Nations for bringing visibility to the problems of the world's indigenous people during the Decade on Indigenous Issues. With the impending end of this decade this year, we urge the world community to maintain the momentum of the decade and make a renewed commitment to support the future

aspirations of the world's indigenous people through greater contributions to the Voluntary Fund.

**Mr. President**

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate Dominica's commitment to the United Nations and its agenda. To us, the United Nations is the embodiment of our collective will to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

Keeping in mind that these goals will create a new world order which young people of the world will inherit, I beg that greater numbers of youth be involved at all levels in the decision-making process.

This requires a massive educational programme to demystify international relations and motivate more people to participate and help shape their world.

I wish delegates to this 59<sup>th</sup> session every success in their deliberations.

I thank you.