



STATEMENT

BY

**THE HONOURABLE TILLMAN THOMAS
PRIME MINISTER OF GRENADA**

**GENERAL DEBATE
SIXTY-THIRD SESSION
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

NEW YORK, 26 SEPTEMBER 2008

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Mr. President
Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen

Mr. President,

I am honoured to join those who have spoken before me in congratulating you on your election to guide the work of this sixty-third Assembly, and in commending your predecessor for his stewardship of the Assembly over the past year.

I also take this opportunity to commend the Secretary-General and his staff for their continued dedication in advancing the work of the Organisation.

Mr. President,

The world has entered an era where the basis of international engagement is driven more by the trade in goods and services, and distribution of the ownership of technology, than by notions of sovereignty.

As a result, small vulnerable states like Grenada are being relentlessly pressed to justify their economic viability. This, along with globalization and other challenges, have negative implications for the stability of our countries.

Against this backdrop, Grenada believes its diplomacy must undergo fundamental change, not only to satisfy domestic expectations but also to enhance our chances for success.

Mr. President,

Just over two months ago, the people of Grenada voted overwhelmingly for new leadership and a change of direction for our nation.

We humbly offer our government as an example of peace and reconciliation in action. We bring together people committed to service notwithstanding our politically turbulent historical background.

In our country we have managed to release distrust and divisiveness that have existed for over thirty years to embrace peace and reconciliation, and move our country forward.

We stand as an example of hope and encouragement to those who are still fighting and can't let go of the blame, the hatred, and the anger associated with the past.

We stand today as proof that peace and reconciliation are possible, that our collective hope for those world regions where brothers fight brothers, and people die needlessly, is not a fanciful or vain hope, it is a valid hope that can be realized.

It is a hope that has materialized in our country as we move forward together, reconciled from a divisive past, to serve our people, and to serve our world through our participation at the United Nations.

From this platform of reconciliation, we focus on and emphasize the strategic significance of partnerships in governance. Our aim is to build strong and meaningful relationships between government, the private sector, the trade unions and other groups within civil society.

Mr. President,

Grenada believes it must play an active role in world affairs, since our own domestic agenda coincides with many aspects of the global development dialogue, particularly as it relates to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Substantial progress has been made in many of the targeted areas.

Moreover, the plans and programmes presently being pursued will ensure that social and economic development does benefit all our people.

Mr. President,

Grenada's main strategy to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger focuses on expanding the productive sectors of the economy, particularly the agricultural sector.

Emphasis will be placed on attracting young people to agriculture, stimulating the rural economy and providing for food security.

Grenada understands the importance of having a well-educated populace. We are pleased that the goal of achieving universal primary education has already been accomplished, and we strive now to ensure that each household have at least one university graduate by the year 2025.

Similarly, the technical and administrative capabilities throughout the public service must be strengthened to support our developmental agenda.

Grenada is convinced that we will not properly advance unless there are fundamental improvements in the development of our human resources. This is an area where international support is specially needed.

Mr. President,

In health care, Grenada has made relatively good progress especially in improving maternal health, decreasing the child mortality rate, and combating HIV/AIDS and other diseases.

Our gratitude goes out to international donors and other partners associated with effective programmes in this area.

Mr. President,

Global Climate Change represents a most pressing and serious challenge to the viability and the very existence of Small Island Developing States.

Climate change is not only an environmental or sustainable development issue; it is first and foremost a human issue.

With the release of the 4th assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), there is now scientific certainty that human activity is the main cause of global climate change. Thus, the opportunity to avoid irreversible damage to the climate system will be lost, if urgent and definite actions are not immediately taken.

Small Island Developing States have contributed very little to the release of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Yet, we are being forced to contend with the devastating effects of these emissions.

We are faced with coral bleaching, sea level rise, salt water intrusion, water scarcity and increasingly severe weather events—all with very real financial and social costs for our already vulnerable economies.

The recent devastation wrought by four major hurricanes in the Northern Caribbean highlights the serious problems we face as a direct result of climate change.

Our solidarity goes out to the countries hardest hit—especially Cuba, Haiti, Jamaica and the Turks and Caicos Islands. We call on the international community to respond appropriately to their plight.

In this regard, Mr. President, Grenada takes this opportunity to strongly voice its support for the Alliance of Small Island Developing States (AOSIS) political declaration on the urgency of responding to climate change, which is slated to be adopted on Monday, September 29th.

Mr. President,

You will appreciate why Grenada speaks passionately on this issue. We have had firsthand experience of the trauma, pain, and economic loss associated with natural disasters. Four years ago, Hurricane Ivan literally destroyed our country.

Thanks to the international community and, of course, our resilient and resourceful people, we have since become more conscious of the imperatives of disaster preparedness and crisis management.

As a consequence, we will continue to be at the forefront of activities to have this issue properly debated and appropriate action plans adopted and implemented.

The leadership role we have played over the last several months, through the Chairmanship of AOSIS, is consistent with that mission.

Importantly, Grenada welcomes Japan's grant-aid programme for environment and climate change under its "Cool Earth Partnership Initiative."

Mr. President,

Another issue of utmost importance to Grenada is the "protection of the Caribbean Sea," an issue which has been repeatedly voiced in this forum. Indeed, Grenada and other Caribbean Member States derive tremendous economic benefits from these pristine waters, which are threatened by trans-shipment of nuclear waste and other hazardous materials.

Grenada reiterates the call for increased attention to be given to this serious matter with a view to having our concerns adequately reflected in a stronger General Assembly resolution.

Mr. President,

Grenada cherishes the democratic style of governance. As such, we pledge to contribute to any multilateral dialogue to promote and enhance the corresponding principles of transparency, accountability, consensus-building and respect for institutions and individual human rights.

In this respect, we intend to implement, in the short term, several critical pieces of legislation already passed by Parliament, which are designed to bring about improvement in the rule of law. I refer specifically to:

- The Integrity in Public Life Act
- The Anti-Corruption Act,
- The Public Procurement and Contract Administration Act,
- The New Audit Act, and
- The Finance Management Act.

Additionally, the early passage of Freedom of Information Legislation will enhance our interest in transparent government.

Mr. President,

Notwithstanding the atmosphere of peace and security prevailing in Grenada, our main task is to continue to enhance the daily livelihood of our people, as we strive to achieve and sustain economic growth, restore fiscal balance and debt sustainability.

This challenge is compounded by unfavourable external factors including high energy costs, escalating food prices and the worrying slowdown in major world economies and financial markets.

Grenada is determined to pursue the construction of a new economy through the implementation of the following strategic initiatives:

- Revitalization of our cocoa and nutmeg industries;

- Increasing the levels of labour productivity;
- Vigorous pursuit of our oil and gas potential;
- Development of a full range of services aimed at creating a knowledge-based export services sector;
- Implementation of an export promotion strategy aimed at identifying and promoting niche products and services;
- Strengthening the investment climate and supporting institutional framework;
- Modernization of our tax policy, structure and administration.

As we proceed with our development, we appeal to the international community for technical assistance and other forms of support. The usual role of the United Nations' bodies including FAO, WHO, UNESCO, UNDP and others, will be critical in the process.

Mr. President,

No one in the developed world can deny the value of a small country like Grenada in the expansion of democracy and the fight against terrorism. Currently, environmental issues also demand urgent action on the part of all states.

These shared goals and values re-shape relations between states. These issues underscore an urgent need for new platforms to address the issue of support for the developmental needs of states.

Grenada believes that the realization of a global partnership for development is of urgent importance.

Serious attention should be paid to addressing the special needs of the least developed countries, in the areas of trade, debt relief, and the environment.

It is Grenada's hope that this 63rd Session will be filled with a spirit of camaraderie, goodwill, collaboration, equity, trust and confidence in our ability to improve the general well-being of mankind.

It is also our hope that the Organization's reform will manifest in such a way that the perceived dominance by some will not be a standard of inflexibility, but will give way to genuine dialogue and cooperation.

Mr. President,

I can assure you that Grenada intends to pursue its external relations based on the principle of mutual respect. Thus, we will be an active participant in multilateral debates on current issues.

Grenada maintains its staunch and unwavering stance in the fight against terrorism, illicit drugs, weapons and human trafficking. We will continue to unconditionally support all initiatives that promote and enhance global peace and security.

Grenada strongly condemns all violent acts by those who are bent on creating chaos and panic in different regions around the world and thus supports all efforts to bring the perpetrators to justice.

Additionally, Grenada is committed to the full implementation of the recommendations adopted by the Caribbean Financial Task Force to combat money laundering and terrorist financing.

Mr. President,

Grenada is optimistic about the opportunities for wider and deeper engagements among Caribbean countries. We strongly believe that all countries should be allowed to develop without hindrances and undue pressures.

Accordingly, Grenada calls on all countries to constructively engage Cuba at this historic juncture.

Grenada is a friend of both the United States and of Cuba, and thus wishes to use this occasion to call on the former to use its diplomatic experience to assist the process of economic and social changes presently taking place in Cuba.

Grenada contends that the stringent unilateral economic measures in place against Cuba will benefit no one and does not facilitate the world's goal of achieving global partnership of equals.

Additionally, Mr. President, Grenada calls on the United Nations to continue its vital role in assisting the African continent in realizing its developmental objectives. In keeping with the declaration of the recently concluded High-level Meeting on Africa's Development, we urge the Secretary-General to use his good office to remind world leaders of their commitments for the betterment of the African people.

Similarly, Mr. President, the plight of Haiti, my fellow CARICOM neighbour, must be addressed with utmost compassion and urgency. Grenada recently pledged a modest monetary donation, and is proud to be a police-contributing country with the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). In this vein, Grenada urges the other Member States of this August Body to do likewise.

Mr. President,

Grenada urges that we capitalize on the spirit of cooperation and collaboration to assist the poor and more vulnerable nations to become and remain viable, and to actively participate in a global process that needs the input of all nations of the world, big and small.

In this regard, I wish to salute the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for considerably easing some of the financial pressure inflicted on our fragile economy by the sharp increases in oil prices. Through the Petro-Caribe Initiative, several Caribbean countries are able to buy oil from Venezuela on softer terms.

Mr. President,

Grenada is convinced that the principles upon which this great organization was founded, as articulated in its Charter, should be given full vitality.

This will certainly redound to our individual and collective benefit, as we seek to confront the many challenges of this modern and complex era.

Grenada commends the Secretary-General for his outstanding leadership of this Organization.

Finally, Mr. President,

Grenada once again congratulates you on your election to facilitate and direct the debate of this sixty third session of the General Assembly. I assure you of our full support as you guide the process.

I thank you.