



Permanent Mission of St. Kitts and Nevis to the United Nations

**STATEMENT
BY
DR. THE HONOURABLE TIMOTHY S. HARRIS
PRIME MINISTER OF SAINT KITTS AND NEVIS
AT THE
SEVENTIETH SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
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“The United Nations at 70-A New Commitment to Action”

(Please Check Against Delivery)

Mr. President

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is indeed an honour for me to address this august body of the United Nations in my capacity as Prime Minister of St. Kitts and Nevis, following the people's historic victory at the polls in February of this year. I take pleasure in sharing the perspectives of the Government and people of St. Kitts and Nevis on matters before this seventieth session of the United Nations General Assembly.

My delegation is pleased that the focus of your theme: ***“The United Nations at 70 – A New Commitment to Action”*** will shed special light on the sustainable development goals, which form the basis of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We are in full agreement with you that the new partnerships for sustainable development will be at the center of the work programme of the United Nations until the year 2030. We are optimistic Mr. President, that the post-2015 development agenda, when taken in conjunction with the recently adopted Addis Ababa Action Agenda, and a forward looking and responsible outcome in December at the COP 21 Paris Climate Change Conference, altogether represent a courageous step forward for humanity which will, if fully implemented, *yield the kind of future that our children and grand-children deserve. So Onward with Action!*

We are reminded that action is required to create decent jobs for our people, build schools for our children, deliver quality health care for all, and provide a home to our working mothers and fathers. Be assured,

Mr. President that St. Kitts and Nevis stands committed to the process of implementation, which includes a robust, systematic and effective monitoring and review process.

Climate Change

Mr. President,

Climate Change for us is of utmost importance. It must never be placed on the proverbial back burner. I dare submit that for Small Island Developing States like St. Kitts and Nevis, it remains an existential threat. Our wellbeing, in its economic, social, and environmental dimensions is threatened by:

- (i) natural disasters,
- (ii) devastating floods,
- (iii) sea level rise,
- (iv) persistent drought,
- (v) coastal erosion, and
- (vi) ocean acidification

These acts of nature have capacity to undermine our economic growth. They threaten food security and bring hardship on our people. The challenge to our vital tourism industry is unsettling and the loss of entire coastal communities is devastating to our islands. The current situation in Dominica represents what islands face when dealing with Climate Change, and we call on the international community to do more to help Small Island Developing States adapt and adjust. We

would like consideration be given not just to climate change adaptation and mitigation, but also disaster response, recovery and insurance.

Mr. President, while we speak of adaptation to climate change and the wider issue of disaster risk mitigation, it is incumbent on us to underscore the significant financial burden placed on national budgets to implement projects designed to build resilience and increase our chances of survival in the face of climate events.

Access to global funding mechanisms such as the Green Climate Fund (GCF) is of critical importance to us. For too long we have been hamstrung by complex application procedures which have prevented us from accessing vital funds to enable us to achieve sustainable development. We welcome the recent decision by the Green Climate Fund board to aim for a floor of 50 per cent of the adaptation allocation for particularly vulnerable countries, including Small Island Developing States (SIDS). We welcome the importance placed on filling capacity gaps in assessing and managing climate finance. Access to finance if it is to be meaningful must be simplified and timely.

My delegation welcomes the establishment of the SIDS DOCK Facility which will serve as a clearing house for implementation of climate related projects in Small Island Developing States (SIDS). We acknowledge the assistance provided by our partners in development. We are convinced that working closely with our partners to build and forge effective and meaningful partnerships will accelerate the pathway to achieving sustainable development in all its dimensions.

Renewable Energy

Mr President St. Kitts and Nevis has emerged as a leader in renewable energy development in the Caribbean. Even now, our country has a mix of wind and solar in our energy grid. By 2016 we shall add Waste to Energy and by 2018 we shall add geothermal energy on the island of Nevis. We are working assiduously to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and so reduce our carbon footprint.

In this ambitious agenda, I thank all our international partners who have lent their technical assistance and expertise in advancing the renewable energy thrust in our country.

Crime and Violence

Mr. President,

The Government of St. Kitts and Nevis is fully committed to social equity, justice, people empowerment, good governance, transparency and prosperity for all. We are a people's government born of the desire to put the development of the people first. Hence, we are hoping to build broader constituencies of support on several fronts, in addressing the problem with crime.

At home, we instituted a Six-Point Plan in our fight to reduce violent crimes in particular. We are investing in new equipment and training to support our law enforcement professionals who prevent, detect and solve crime. We are working hard to build a new professional culture among and between our law enforcement agencies. We are

encouraged by new statistics pointing to a decline in major crimes in the Federation, but much more must be done.

Therefore, our Government is determined to aggressively confront the issues of crime. We will work on multiple tracks including working to empower families and communities through education, skills development initiatives and civic programmes. We will work in the schools, with NGOs and our religious leaders and with youth themselves, especially those most likely to become targets or perpetrators of criminal behaviour, to offer them alternatives. We will offer them opportunities for personal growth, for decent work and for constructive engagement in society.

This is a challenge to which we are committed and which we have to win. However, if small states are to overcome the challenges posed and exacerbated by transnational criminal activities, we must work in partnership. We need the support of gun producing countries to restrict the movement of illegal guns, light weapons and ammunitions. Those who produce the fire arms must do more to stop them from reaching our shores. We must share information and improve access to opportunities, education and employment because sustainable development is not achievable in an environment of crime and violence. The prosperity which must be built brick by brick, day by day, will become realizable only in context of peaceful and safe societies.

Combatting Non Communicable Diseases and AIDS

Mr. President,

St. Kitts and Nevis, like the rest of CARICOM has consistently lent its voice to the clarion call for greater attention to be paid to the harmful impact of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) to our main resource – our human capital.

Indeed, we continue to wrestle with the high incidence of NCDs like cancer, heart disease, diabetes and hypertension in our country and throughout the CARICOM region. We wish to reiterate our call for a stronger global response to combating this in developing countries like ours.

We remain hopeful that the inclusion of NCDs into the sustainable development goals and the implementation of the targets and indicators at the national level will serve to reverse the high incidence of NCDs at the national, regional and global levels. The famous adage “A nation’s wealth is a nations health” resonates with us. We would therefore urge the United Nations through its specialised agencies and regional offices to play a leading role in this regard.

We are pleased with the work of UNAIDS and our own CARPHA, and PANCAP in CARICOM and we call for continued global solidarity in this endeavour. Indeed, my own country is on track to achieve zero mother-to-child transmission by the end of 2015 and we are committed to the CARICOM region becoming the first in the world to **END AIDS by 2030**.

Strategic Partnerships

Taiwan

Mr. President,

My Government is pleased to draw the attention of the international community to the invaluable contribution made by the Government of the Republic of China (Taiwan) in the areas of international cooperation, health, technology and peace and security. We live in an age where global partnership is a prerequisite for solving complex problems at the international level.

The Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis is proud to announce that the relationship established over three decades ago with the Republic of China (Taiwan) has yielded benefits in all areas of sustainable development. This level of engagement between developing country and partner in development is indeed a model fit for consideration by small states like St. Kitts and Nevis in their quest for achieving sustainable development.

Venezuela

As we look to models and arrangements for advancing our global agenda, we found pragmatic beneficial value in our PetroCaribe agreement with Venezuela in support of poverty alleviation and social cohesion. Venezuela under President Chavez, and now President Maduro must be commended for showing the world that there can be a

better way and a more helpful way of driving the developmental agenda.

St. Kitts and Nevis is cognizant of the territorial issues which exist between Venezuela and our CARICOM colleague Guyana. We expect that the leaders of Venezuela and Guyana will resolve these issues peacefully and in accordance with international law. My Government stands willing to assist along with CARICOM in the resolution of these challenging issues.

Cuba

Mr. President,

St. Kitts and Nevis is indeed pleased by the recent decision by the Governments of Cuba and the United States to reestablish diplomatic relations. This resolution has long been advocated by CARICOM.

This is the opportune time for us to usher in a new era of regional partnership and cooperation.

My own country has benefitted substantially from capacity building in the areas of education and health due to our partnership with Cuba.

We applaud several prescriptions outlined in President Raul Castro's address to this Assembly, calling for better arrangements for Caribbean countries and for special and differential treatment.

We concur that the issue of reparation must be seen in the broader context of the evil of slavery and its lingering negative impact on the

development of the Caribbean. Reparation has to be considered as a pathway to addressing the perennial disadvantages that slavery has caused to our economies and societies.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Mr. President, as part of our development agenda, St. Kitts and Nevis will work daily to ensure that every citizen has access to high quality health care, a 21st century education, decent work and an improved quality of life consistent with the 2030 SDG Agenda.

We remain eager to work within the United Nations system, but the United Nations must be re-energised, retooled and refocused to meet the challenges of the 21st century. In fact, we want to see a United Nations strengthened reflective of the reality of our world, the needs of its membership and the wishes of our diverse and swelling populations.

In St. Kitts and Nevis we are building a modern, responsible and responsive society. We are optimistic that in the months and years ahead, the United Nations and its specialised agencies will be more robust, nimble, modern and responsive in order to complement our work and to be better able to prevent crises in ways that effectively improves lives.

It is through these types of commitments and action that we will transform our beloved St. Kitts and Nevis, the United Nations and our world.

I thank you!