

COMMONWEALTH OF DOMINICA



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF DOMINICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS
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STATEMENT

BY

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OF THE

COMMONWEALTH OF DOMINICA

AT

THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE
SIXTY-SECOND SESSION OF
THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
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**Mr. President,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Let me, Mr. President, at the outset congratulate you on your election as President of the Sixty-Second Session of the General Assembly and to assure you of the cooperation of the Dominica delegation throughout this General Assembly. I commend your predecessor, Her Excellency Sheika Haya Rashid Al-Khalifa, for her leadership during the Sixty-First Session of the General Assembly.

I also wish to congratulate Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon on his election. I wish him a long and successful tenure, and hope that under his leadership the United Nations will give greater attention to the plight of the world's small island developing states, which are among the most vulnerable to climate change, natural disasters, and a rise in sea levels.

Mr. President,

In the interdependent world which we live in today, the promotion of the fundamental values of peace, democracy, human rights and development depend on strong multilateral institutions. Dominica believes that it is only a strong United Nations which is sensitive to the variable geometry of its own complex construction that can serve as the foundation of our shared ambitions for effective multilateralism, and a rules-based international order.

The experience of the last decade has taught us one important lesson, that global challenges require global responses, and that these challenges can only receive the appropriate responses through the framework of multilateral action. The United Nations is the undisputed center for multilateralism, and we must all demonstrate unwavering commitment to vest in the United Nations the authority and allow it the space to undertake effective interventions in the interest of the preservation of human life, human rights, peace, justice, democracy and the rule of law.

More than ever, we need a United Nations that is not only guided by the principles which oversaw its creation, but which is capable of adapting to the growing challenges of today's globalized world. We need an effective United Nations that will place the highest priority on development, while having the capacity to respond to the various crises that threaten international peace and security.

Mr. President,

The work of the international community in poverty alleviation must be accelerated, as the chasm between the rich and the poor continues to widen. In this connection, the importance of achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015 is critical. We must therefore rededicate ourselves to the implementation of the actions called for in

the International Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, and in relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, including those related to the right to development, alleviation of burdensome debt, and fair and equitable trading rules.

Mr. President,

Climate Change is the most pressing environmental problem humankind has ever faced. It seriously threatens human security and will undermine our ability to achieve the MDGs. Unless there is a global and collective response, this planet will become unlivable for most of us.

Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are most vulnerable to the effects of climate change even though they contribute the least to emissions of greenhouse gases. Sea level rise threatens the territorial existence of SIDS, and low lying islands in the Indian Ocean, the Pacific, and the Caribbean may simply disappear in the next thirty years or less, as the melting of the polar ice caps and mountain glaciers on all continents becomes the new reality of unchecked climate change. The disappearance of beaches, coastal tourism plant and loss of coastal communication infrastructure would devastate the tourism economy of most island states. Other regions are also beginning to experience the effects of these climatic changes with persistent conditions of drought followed by devastating flooding.

Rising sea temperature is causing death and bleaching of coral reefs, which in turn are impacting negatively on fish stocks, the major protein source of island states. It is estimated that a one-degree increase in sea temperature over pre-industrial levels will lead to significant loss of tuna and dolphin stocks for a large number of island states.

Rising sea temperature also provides a fertile ground for the development of tropical storms and hurricanes which affect the Caribbean region every year. Climate change is contributing to the frequency and severity of these storms. We are currently in the midst of the 2007 hurricane season and over a two-week period in the month of August, the Caribbean region suffered the onslaught of two Category 5 hurricanes, Dean and Felix. These storms seriously affected Dominica, Guadeloupe, Martinique, St. Lucia, Jamaica, Belize, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Mexico. We are only halfway through this hurricane season which is forecasted to have seven Category 5 hurricanes. It may very well be that the worst is yet to come.

My own country, Dominica, was severely battered by Hurricane Dean, the third worst hurricane to make landfall in the Caribbean since 1850. After 15 hours of buffeting by winds of 110 miles per hour, and continuous rainfall, our agricultural economy was destroyed, our infrastructure devastated by swollen rivers and numerous landslides, and our housing stock seriously affected.

We appreciate greatly the solidarity of a number of countries, regionally and extra-regionally, and the generous support they have provided in the immediate aftermath, but

now comes the serious challenge of reconstruction, which is estimated to cost over a hundred million dollars (US \$100, 000, 000).

Mr. President,

The High Level Event on Climate Change helped to underscore that doing nothing about climate change will have enormous negative implications for all countries, but more particularly for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS). The pace of climate change negotiations is disconcertingly slow because it is not adequately responsive to the urgency dictated by science.

We urge all the nations of the world to come to Bali in December prepared to advance the multilateral negotiations. Demonstration of collective political will and commitment to determined action will be critical if we must reach agreement on a fair, effective, flexible and inclusive climate regime under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol. Developed countries and the more advanced developing countries must make a greater effort to do more and to be considerate of the emergency situation facing the small island states.

Mr. President,

We continue to stress that the vulnerable situation of the SIDS must be addressed through the vigorous implementation of the actions called for in the Mauritius Strategy on the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

Mr. President,

We call for the full implementation of the mandates contained in the Millennium Declaration, in particular the commitments to development and poverty eradication, protection of the common environment, and realization of human rights, democracy and good governance. As a follow-up to the reform commitments emanating from the 2005 Summit, we welcome the reports of the High-Level Panel and of the Secretary-General on System-Wide Coherence, and we hope for the strengthened capacity of the UN in development, humanitarian assistance and the environment.

Mr. President,

The adoption of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy by the General Assembly was an important achievement. It will be meaningless, however, if we do not address its full implementation. Small states like Dominica and the rest of the member states of the Organization of the Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) must be assisted to meet the various obligations required by the implementation of the counter-terrorism conventions.

As a country with an indigenous Kalinago population, Dominica is proud to have played a role in the negotiation process that led to the recent adoption of the UN Declaration on

the Rights of the Indigenous People, and we call on those member states that have not yet embraced the Declaration to do so.

Mr. President,

Dominica applauds the African Union for its unwavering efforts towards the maintenance of peace and security on the African continent and we are supportive of the long-term vision of an African peace and security architecture. In this context, Dominica welcomes the creation of UNAMID, the peace initiative for Darfur of the United Nations and the African Union, which we hope will contribute to the political resolution of this conflict and to bring to an end its tragic humanitarian consequences in Sudan and the neighbouring states.

In our own region, we welcome the continuing engagement of the United Nations and the Organization of American States (OAS) in Haiti. We urge the United Nations to make the commitment to go beyond the current engagement in Haiti through MINUSTAH, to a longer-term engagement that will bring sustainable economic stability and development to Haiti. We appreciate the important role of Brazil and the other member states, which are participating in MINUSTAH, but we must be careful not to see these interventions as the emergency response of an international fire brigade quickly extinguishing political conflagrations and only remaining long enough to dampen the embers of renewed conflict.

Haiti's problems stem from underdevelopment and extensive periods of dictatorship. It is in democracy and development therefore that the solutions for Haiti lie. A stable and prosperous Haiti will significantly strengthen CARICOM and contribute meaningfully to the process of deepened regional integration and the attendant march towards the Caribbean Single Market and Economy.

Recent violent upheavals in Myanmar are not encouraging for the hoped for resolution of the long-standing difficulties afflicting that country in its transition to democracy. We urge influential countries in South East Asia, who have friendly relations with the military regime in Rangoon, to use their good offices in support of the UN effort to bring about a political solution and national reconciliation with all concerned parties.

Mr. President,

The continued presence of the Republic of France, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States of America in the Caribbean should provide an opportunity for the strategic engagement of these metropolises, Canada, and Spain with the independent Caribbean States to create in the Caribbean a zone of peace, security and prosperity, complementing the invaluable development assistance of the People's Republic of China, the Republic of Cuba, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Japan and the European Union.

Mr. President,

I wish to underscore the vital importance of a fair global trading system as the only way for small states to survive in this globalized world. We do not want to depend on fast disappearing development assistance. We want to have the assurance that we will be able to trade the goods and services we produce, on terms and conditions which will enable us to build our economies and to provide employment for our citizens. That is why we continue to call for the earliest possible conclusion of the World Trade Organization's Doha Development Round. We urge the major trading nations to demonstrate a spirit of compromise and constructiveness backed by a genuine will to commit to a balanced agreement that embraces the principle of special and differential treatment for Small Island Developing States and places development at the centre of any final agreement.

Mr. President,

Dominica has made important progress in its quest to adapt to the challenges of trade liberalization and its attendant preferences erosion. These changing terms of trade have progressively devastated our primary source of foreign exchange earnings that is the export of bananas. The persistent assault on our banana exports to the European Union through unrelenting recourse to the WTO Disputes Settlement Body has impacted negatively on our overall economy. As a result we have had to undergo a structural adjustment programme, undertake stringent fiscal measures which required sacrifices of the population as a whole in order to stabilize the deteriorating fiscal and economic position. We have turned the corner and have returned to a period of sustained economic growth and we are moving steadily to the diversification of our economy. The impact of Hurricane Dean so soon afterwards will therefore be doubly devastating.

We are working towards a new energy regime that will significantly reduce our dependence on fossil fuels for our energy needs and slow the hemorrhaging of scarce foreign exchange earnings to meet the ever-rising cost of petroleum products. We plan to increase our current 40% renewable energy generation from hydro through initiatives towards geothermal energy development and further expansion of hydropower.

We will need the continuing partnership of the development partners to remain on this path towards successful economic transformation.

In closing, Mr. President,

May I call on the United Nations once more to re-dedicate itself to putting development as the highest priority of this august body. Together, the developed countries and the developing countries must work in a cooperative manner to address the challenges of climate change and sustainable development. We can work together to defeat poverty and underdevelopment and to give hope and dignity to all peoples.

To achieve this, we must implement the decisions that we take here in this General Assembly every year. The time for action is now.

I thank you, Mr. President.