

STATEMENT BY HONOURABLE CHARLES A. SAVARIN MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, TRADE, AND LABOUR OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF DOMINICA AT THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE SIXTY-FIRST SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

New York, September 26, 2006 - Madam President, Permit me to extend my congratulations to you and your country, Bahrain, on your election as President of the Sixty-first Session of the United Nations General Assembly. I am confident that you will carry forward the able legacy left by your predecessor, His Excellency, Mr. Jan Eliasson of Sweden. He deserves special recognition for the competent and dedicated manner in which he presided over the 60th Session, and facilitated the positive outcomes we have witnessed so far in the United Nations reform agenda.

Let me also pay tribute to His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan for a distinguished career as an international civil servant, more specifically his 10-year stint as Secretary-General of the United Nations. His wisdom, and unwavering commitment to multi-lateralism have contributed immensely to a revitalized United Nations. He will most certainly be remembered for his steadfast promotion of human rights, creating space at the United Nations for civil society and the private sector, and his visionary outlook for the future of the United Nations in the current global dispensation. We wish to thank him for his invaluable service to this organization and its member states and to extend our very best wishes to him in his future endeavours.

Madam President, The World Summit last year started us on the path of re-engineering the United Nations, to make it more relevant and responsive to the many challenges that threaten peace and security in the world at the beginning of this century. The Outcome Document clearly reflected that member states reached an historic compromise on a number of core principles and attendant actions to squarely face the myriad problems facing the planet.

Most importantly, we reaffirmed the commitment we made at the beginning of the Millennium to confront the scourge of poverty and to improve the living conditions for millions of people living in abject poverty. Our challenge today is to clarify how the international community can more effectively contribute towards the global goals of poverty alleviation, peace and development for all of humanity.

The dynamics of today's world, conditioned by immense forces of change have forced us to accept the stark reality that no nation can prosper alone, and that the problems we face demand a global consensus. Consequently, all of us must emphatically reaffirm the United Nation's central role in the cooperative management of the world's problems. Dominica firmly supports a rejuvenated United Nations and universal application of its ideals, in particular the maintenance of international peace and security, protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and promotion of international cooperation in solving economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems.

Madam President, We welcome the progress towards realizing some of the commitments made by world leaders last year. Creation of the Peacebuilding Commission now presents a great opportunity for ensuring a tangible connection between conflict resolution and development. It is our hope that the new Human Rights Council (HRC) will remain focused on its mission and avoid becoming entangled in the politicization that contributed to the eventual demise of its predecessor.

The Human Rights Council has made a commendable start with the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which in turn gives great impetus to the aspirations of the Second United Nations Decade on Indigenous People, which the Commonwealth of Dominica has

steadfastly supported as one of the few Caribbean countries with a thriving Indigenous Carib population. We therefore call on the General Assembly to give its full support to the adoption of this Declaration by consensus.

The Commonwealth of Dominica located as we are in the hurricane belt, an earthquake zone and a volcanic region, particularly welcomes the establishment of the Central Emergency Response Fund, which we believe will significantly enhance the capacity of the United Nations to more effectively respond to the increasing frequency of natural disasters brought about by climate change and global warming. We the member states now have an obligation to contribute to the building of the Fund, while at the same time taking steps to put in place measures to combat climate change and reduce our emission of greenhouse gases.

Member states must be commended for movement in a few important areas that will contribute to a revitalized United Nations. The first relates to progress in the area of Secretariat and management reforms, which we hope will contribute to greater transparency and accountability in UN operations. Second, is the finalization on August 26 of the new treaty protecting the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and I am pleased to announce that my Government is committed to its signing and ratification. We believe that the convention provides a solid basis for breaking down the discrimination directed towards people with disabilities.

Thirdly, is the adoption by the General Assembly on September 8 of a United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. Through this action, we have in a small way honoured the numerous victims of international terrorism and demonstrated our resolve to combat the scourge of terrorism wherever it exists. We must continue work towards a counter-terrorism convention.

Madam President, My country is continuing to make progress towards realization of the Millennium Development Goals despite the many challenges with which it is confronted. In the aftermath of the devastation wreaked upon our economy by the rulings of the WTO disputes settlement mechanism resulting in the virtual dismantling of our banana industry, we had to undergo stringent fiscal adjustments due to unsustainable debt. The great sacrifice of the Dominican people resulted in modest economic growth and helped to consolidate our economic recovery. Spiraling oil prices however, are seriously threatening the modest gains we have made. National effort is therefore focused on developing alternative sources of renewable energy such as hydro, wind and geothermal.

Recent global events have not been encouraging. The collapse of the Doha Development Round further threatens to marginalize Small Island Developing States like Dominica in the global trading system. Trade is one central element in the international agenda that can foster sustainable economic growth, reduce our dependence on declining aid, and contribute to realization of the Millennium Development Goals and the development aspirations of Small Vulnerable Economies. The global trading system must recognize however that there is no such thing as a level playing field even among developing countries as there are varying levels of size, vulnerability and development. There are large developing countries, there are small developing countries and there are very small developing countries. In addition there are Least Developed Countries, which may be large or small. Where the very small developing countries are islands, the vulnerability is multiplied several fold.

In addition to market access therefore, Small Island Developing States require increased development finance for trade and productive capacity enhancement combined with trade rules that are responsive to their development aspirations. In this regard, Small Vulnerable Economies

and LDCs urgently need a trading system that acknowledges their vulnerability and grants them the necessary special and differential treatment. This will ensure that they benefit from their participation in the global system and lead to greater equity and fairness in the process.

Madam President, Increasingly, South-South cooperation has become vitally important to countries like the Commonwealth of Dominica as the developed nations retreat from fulfilling their commitment to contribute 0.7% of their GDP for development assistance. South-South cooperation from Trinidad and Tobago, Cuba, China, Venezuela, Nigeria and Libya is contributing positively to our human resource development, revitalization of our infrastructure, and implementation of our public sector investment programme.

We believe that the developed countries can make a greater effort to assist us in realizing the commitments made under the Barbados Programme of Action (BPOA) and the 2005 Mauritius Strategy for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

We in CARICOM understand the critical importance of deepening regional integration and that is why we agreed this year to move towards the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME). That development, we believe is an important pillar in maximizing regional trade and development and in minimizing the negative impact which is likely to be inflicted upon us, as small vulnerable economies, from the forces of globalization. We look forward to the support of the donor community in this important endeavour.

Good neighbourliness is an important plank of our foreign policy and through this approach we seek to continuously build and strengthen relations with all the countries of the greater Caribbean Basin, including Cuba, United States of America, and Venezuela. We believe in harmonious and friendly relations with all our neighbours. We should not be expected to choose one over the other but should be seen more as a bridge across the Caribbean Basin.

Maritime and border disputes within our region, and particularly between CARICOM member states and our neighbours in Central and South America, are best resolved in an atmosphere of friendship and cooperation using the good offices of the United Nations, the Organization of American States, and other fora, which can bring about resolution to such disputes.

Madam President, 2007 will mark the bi-centennial of the abolition of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in the former British Empire, and we anticipate a commemorative event in the General Assembly to mark this historic occasion. The CARICOM Group of nations will table a resolution in the General Assembly to mark the occasion and expects the support of all the member states of the United Nations in this regard.

We welcome the return to constitutional government in Haiti, the first country to declare its independence from colonialism and slavery, and commit ourselves to work closely with President René Preval and his Government in their development efforts. We welcome also the recent announcement of commitments to Haiti by the Government of the United States of \$492 million over three years, and that of the Government of Canada of \$100 million annually. We appreciate greatly the many pledges of assistance for Haiti's reconstruction from various bilateral and multilateral donors and wish to emphasize the necessity for these pledges to be disbursed on a timely basis to provide the Haitian government with the capacity to bring about improvement the physical and social infrastructure and the quality of life of the people of this CARICOM Member State.

Madam President, The situation in Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Darfur, and the Middle East continue to occupy our attention. Regarding the unfortunate devastation caused by the war between Israel and Hezbollah, we believe that Security Council resolution 1701 is a good basis for a future peaceful relationship between Israel and Lebanon, and we urge both countries and neighbouring states to abide by the provisions of that resolution. The Commonwealth of Dominica has stated before in this forum that the only solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is the establishment of a sovereign, independent Palestinian State alongside the State of Israel, both with secure and defensible borders recognized by the international community.

The situation in Darfur is very troubling and the international community must take action now. We commend the African Union for renewing the mandate of the African Union Peacekeeping Force, and urge the Sudanese Government to reconsider its opposition to the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping force to bolster the efforts of the African Union to provide protection and security for the people of Darfur, which is a prerequisite for a lasting solution to the underlying problems giving rise to the state of conflict.

Madame President, In conclusion, let me express my delegation's wish for a successful Sixty-first session under your leadership. It is our hope that the development agenda will once again assume the highest priority of the General Assembly and that we can more effectively promote peace and security, eradicate terrorism, and above all promote poverty alleviation. We must also focus on continuation of the reform agenda of the United Nations system, including the Security Council and ECOSOC reform. We can prevail if we act responsibly and together. Support for multilateralism and the ideals of the United Nations must remain our priority. I thank you.

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