



TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

PERMANENT MISSION OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO TO THE UNITED NATIONS
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STATEMENT

by

The Honourable Kamla Persad-Bissessar,
Prime Minister of the
Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

in the

General Debate of the
Sixty-fifth session of the United Nations
General Assembly



United Nations Headquarters
New York
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INTRODUCTION

Mr. President

I offer you my sincere congratulations on your election as President of the 65th Session of the General Assembly.

I also congratulate your predecessor, H.E. Dr. Ali Abdussalam Treki for his able leadership of the General Assembly during the past year.

I take this opportunity to recognize the leadership of Secretary-General Ban Ki –Moon whose influence brought to this 65th Assembly 139 Heads to re-dedicate efforts to achieve the MDG's by 2015.

It is with a sense of hope for a better world that I address this august assembly of leaders and decision makers.

I join the general assembly and the international community in echoing the call for a world where people are again placed at the center of our actions.

- Where the care of children is given greater priority,
- Where poverty is seen as an enemy of human dignity,
- Where peace can be achieved without bloodshed,
- Where conversations resulting in greater tolerance, mutual respect and understanding would motivate cooperation and unity,
- And where selflessly sacrificing one's best skills and resources for the benefit of fellow human beings would be the primary purpose of our actions.

I believe that all of this is possible if we recommit ourselves to the founding principles upon which the United Nations (UN) was built.

THE UNITED NATIONS IS A VOICE FOR ALL WITHOUT DISTINCTION

The United Nations must continue to provide a voice to all States whether small, or large, developed or developing, industrialized or agrarian.

The Charter of the UN provides for the sovereign equality of all states.

It must be at the centre of all discussions and decisions geared towards meeting the demands of its membership in this third millennium of mankind (21st century).

For that reason, we welcome the theme of this year's debate: "Reaffirming *the central role of the United Nations in global governance*".

It is both timely and consistent with the repeated calls of Member States for the UN to adopt a more aggressive posture in discharging its mandate.

No nation will be safe, no democracy will prevail if there is not mutual cooperation towards global stability, fashioned by opportunity for all, equity and the ability to feed, provide health care, clothing, housing and education for people everywhere.

We are all in this together. WE shall rise or fall together.

Let us not take for granted the significance of our presence here.

That we can sit in one hall means that we can also work together to achieve these noble objectives which foster and promote global peace and stability.

To realize these goals, our debate of this topic must not be reduced to empty rhetoric and nice language.

We must therefore reaffirm the essential role of the UN in resolving global issues.

We must make the UN more accountable!

A WIDER DEFINITION OF GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

Global governance must not only mean agreement on a body of rules, laws, or practices which places the United Nations at the centre of all matters which confront the international community;

It must also mean that we hold our leaders and institutions more accountable for their actions – delivering a better quality of life for all our peoples.

No nation large or small must be exempted.

Global governance cannot be limited to the crafting of instruments related to the promotion of democracy.

A key component must be the creation of fair and equitable rules to enhance the development prospects of developing countries.

Whilst we recognize the rules governing membership of groupings such as the G20, a mechanism must be established to insert the voice of the United Nations in the activities of these groupings such that their concerns and needs are actively considered.

Trinidad and Tobago therefore calls for the establishment of predictable and regular channels to facilitate dialogue between the G20 nations and Members of the United Nations, which constitute the G192.

It is our hope that some of these issues would be examined at the next G20 Summit scheduled for Seoul in the Republic of Korea in November of this year.

THE COMMONWEALTH

At the same time, Mr. President, Trinidad and Tobago as Chair in Office of the Commonwealth calls on the General Assembly to recognize the important work being done by the Commonwealth as it relates to small vulnerable economies.

The international community must do more to deal with the economic plight of its most vulnerable members who depend heavily on the flow of international capital and trade to ensure that their developmental needs are met.

Trinidad and Tobago intends to use its position as Chair of the Commonwealth to promote enhanced cooperation between the United Nations and the Commonwealth to facilitate measures to provide development financing on a predictable manner to developing countries.

This would mean a willingness on the part of International Financing Institutions to re-examine whether some of their policies have been creating a perpetual cycle of poverty for small and vulnerable nations. Such a cycle must not be allowed to continue.

THE MDG'S

A few days ago I had the opportunity to participate in the High-Level Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Since then, the question which keeps lingering in my mind is whether we would have to convene another meeting in the future to restate the urgent need to provide the necessary assistance to developing countries so that they could meet the MDGs.

While I applaud the noble efforts of the UN in providing an enabling environment for leaders to exchange ideas and to formulate solutions on the subject, I must confess that over the years we have had ample rhetoric and insufficient action on this matter.

In Trinidad and Tobago, we have attempted to be more proactive and are putting in place machinery in the newly established Ministry of the People to deal with poverty eradication and hunger as a priority.

This is only one vehicle aimed at placing us in a position to honour our commitments to reduce the levels of poverty.

But international cooperation is also essential.

Good governance requires that developed countries fulfill their commitments made at the Millennium Summit to provide assistance to developing countries so that they could achieve the MDGs by the projected deadline.

The deficit in commitment has to be addressed if real advances are to be made with respect to the progress of humanity measured to some extent by the MDGs.

WE ALL HAVE A DUTY TO THE FUTURE. IT WILL BE MEASURED BY HOW WE FULFILL OUR RESPONSIBILITIES TODAY.

Children's Life Fund

My government has created the Children's Life Fund to provide funding and critical support for children needing life saving surgery.

It is my belief that children must not die in my country or in any other country because they cannot afford health care. NOT IN 2010!

There must be new arrangements and relationships between countries that have advanced medical technology and those without so that children of the poorest nations can grow as healthy human beings and achieve their full potential.

It is only when this is done that the world will progress.

NCDS

Trinidad and Tobago, however, remains steadfast in its support of the work of this institution.

There is really no substitute for the UN. It remains an indispensable platform for small States to introduce items on the international agenda and have them considered and debated.

This was observed when Trinidad and Tobago and other CARICOM Member States succeeded in their call for international attention to tackle the issue of the "Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases".

We have agreed that in September 2011 a High- Level Meeting of the General Assembly on Non- Communicable Diseases be convened.

Much work remains to be done if we are to have a successful meeting next year.

If we achieve the desired results at this summit, the UN would have put in place a common set of principles to tackle this important concern of global public health.

Trinidad and Tobago therefore urges all Member States to participate in this meeting at the level of Heads of State or Government.

CLIMATE CHANGE

In seeking to promote and safeguard the welfare of our planet from the harmful effects of climate change, T&T as a small island developing state supports the measures aimed at mitigating the effects of climate change which threatens the environment, economic livelihood, territorial integrity and the very survival of many States.

Although the United Nations continues to be at the forefront of discussions to confront this formidable challenge, progress has been much too slow.

In making our contribution to the process, we wish to reiterate the position of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) that there should be deep and ambitious cuts in greenhouse gas emissions by developed countries amounting to about 40 to 50% by the year 2020 and 85 to 90% by 2050.

In order for there to be meaningful advancement at COP16 to be held in Mexico in December, we must utilize the meeting to be held in Tianjin, China in October, to agree on the identification of additional and predictable sources of finance, institutional issues related to finance and the form of the final agreement.

Urgent and concerted action is the only viable option to bring about the desired results at the upcoming negotiations.

NATURAL DISASTERS

One of the first problems I encountered almost immediately after taking the oath of office four months ago as the first female Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, was the issue of unprecedented and widespread flooding which resulted in tremendous financial and other losses to the victims and placed a strain on the resources of the local emergency management services.

My government continues to provide assistance to the affected communities while devising long-term strategies to reduce the incidence of this type of flooding.

Nevertheless, I recognize that Trinidad and Tobago is not the only country which has been faced with this grave problem.

Recent events in places like Haiti, Pakistan and Russia, have demonstrated that greater international action is needed to provide relief to those affected by flooding and other natural disasters.

In the Caribbean the case of a devastated Haiti provides the International community with the opportunity for not only being compassionate, but to also learn major lessons on disaster preparedness and management.

Haiti is a challenge not only to our global conscience but also to our collective will to unite to save a nation.

Notwithstanding the valuable work being done by the Central Emergency Relief Fund (CERF), to which Trinidad and Tobago has made annual contributions, more action is required to provide the agency with the requisite resources in the face of ever increasing natural disasters.

In this regard, I call upon those States that are in a position to do so, to make financial contributions to CERF so that it can respond more efficiently and effectively to humanitarian crises due to floods and other natural disasters.

PROLIFERATION OF ILLEGAL SMALL ARMS

Another persistent matter which is receiving the attention of my government and other governments of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) is the illegal proliferation of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition.

In our attempts at addressing this problem, we have had to divert financial resources which could have otherwise been used for economic and social development.

Additionally, we have observed an increase in gang-related violence, homicides, the illegal narcotics trade and organized crime.

The origin of the illicit trade in these weapons is beyond our national borders, and is international in dimension.

It therefore requires a global response.

We are encouraged by the attempts of the United Nations to conclude a legally binding agreement to regulate the trade in conventional weapons.

It is our view that this instrument must also make provision for regulating the trade in small arms and light weapons thereby preventing their illegal diversion.

Trinidad and Tobago also calls for a strong and effective implementation regime to ensure proper compliance with the provisions of the treaty.

It must also include a proper verification mechanism and a sanctions regime for breach of its terms. These safeguards would assist in preserving the object and purpose of the agreement.

We have partnered with other members of the international community to establish rules governing the non-proliferation of nuclear, chemical, and other types of weapons that could create untold suffering on humanity.

Small arms and the Caribbean

In the Caribbean, our weapons of mass destruction are small arms and light weapons.

I implore all those States which have been reticent about the need for an ATT to join us in this undertaking.

I pledge the commitment of my government to work with other like-minded states, such as Australia to ensure a successful outcome of the Preparatory Committee and ultimately, the UN Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty scheduled to take place in 2012.

INTERNATIONAL DRUG TRAFFICKING AND THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

Regulating the trade in small arms and light weapons is not an end in itself.

Urgent international action must also be taken to deal with the issue of international drug trafficking.

The perpetrators of this international crime continue to escape international justice leading to a culture of impunity.

We cannot allow our young people to continue to fall victims to this insidious monster which has fuelled transnational organized crime and resulted in cross border armed violence which threaten the political and social stability of many nations.

National governments alone cannot solve this problem because of its global dimension.

Governments are often forced to divert scarce resources originally intended for social and economic programmes in order to confront this challenge.

We need urgent action to address this problem.

In 1989, the Honourable Arthur NR Robinson, former Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, took the political initiative to reintroduce on the agenda of the United Nations General Assembly, the need for the establishment of a permanent International criminal Court (ICC).

This court has since been established.

However, his call for international drug trafficking to be included as a crime within the jurisdiction of the ICC has not been realized.

Today it is even more critical for it to be done.

I now call upon Member States of the United Nations which are States Parties to the Rome Statute of the ICC to include international drug trafficking as a crime within the jurisdiction of the ICC.

The ICC is the only credible international judicial organ with the competence to prosecute those who perpetrate this crime.

UN WOMEN

One area of reform which I hold dearly is the establishment of UN Women, an entity that consolidates four previous agencies dealing with gender equality and the empowerment of women.

I am confident that this venture which will become fully operational by January 2011 would provide a coherent approach in attending to issues affecting women internationally.

It is my hope that UN Women would receive the support of all States.

RESOLUTION “women, disarmament, arms control and non proliferation”

Ten years ago the Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, acknowledging that there is no sustainable peace and security without the involvement and contribution of women.

Trinidad and Tobago is committed to advancing the peace and security agenda of the UN.

My country’s attachment to the promotion of women is equally strong.

That is why I wish to announce that Trinidad and Tobago will introduce in the First Committee of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, internal peace and security, a resolution on “women, disarmament, arms control and non proliferation.”

I pledge the support of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago for this initiative.

CONCLUSION

We have spent a decade in this millennium.

In retrospect, have we advanced as a world community in ways which will create a sustainable environment and secure the lives of people everywhere?

We have made tremendous strides in communications technology.

We are a global village as a result of improvements but, regrettably, we cannot say that we are our neighbour's keepers.

There are still too many fences between us, fences of politics, ideology, religion, ethnicity, culture and traditions.

As human beings we have the unique capacity to reason and on the basis of that reasoning to develop deeper understandings.

Let us pledge to use this understanding gained from reasoning to promote conversations between nations and peoples, conversations to replace aggression and threats, conversations geared to finding peaceful ways to deal with differences, conversations borne out of mutual respect for each other as people and nations, conversations founded upon the respect for diversity, conversations that ensure the survival of the human race and the planet as its purpose.

As I end my contribution to this debate, I wish to compliment the United Nations for all of the work designed to revitalize this unique global body.

I also affirm our support for efforts and policies aimed at revitalizing the central role of the United Nations in global governance.

I thank you, Mr. President.