

COMMONWEALTH OF DOMINICA



STATEMENT BY

**H.E. DR. NICHOLAS J.O. LIVERPOOL
PRESIDENT
OF THE
COMMONWEALTH OF DOMINICA**

**AT THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE
SIXTY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

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PERMANENT MISSION OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF DOMINICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS
800 Second Avenue, Suite 400H • New York, N.Y. 10017 • Tel: 212 949 0853 • Fax: 212 808 4975

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Mr. President

Mr. Secretary General

Heads of State and Government

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me begin by joining other colleague Heads of State, in congratulating you on your well-deserved election as the President of the 64th Session of the General Assembly. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank H.E. Father Miguel D'Escoto Brockman of Nicaragua for his effective stewardship of the 63rd Session, and to salute Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his tireless efforts towards promoting global peace, security, and development.

Mr. President,

It is an internationally accepted fact, that we are in a period characterized by unprecedented crisis. Crises related to basic human needs such as food, water, and energy are contributing to great distress and hardship in every region of our world, and precipitating an escalation in poverty which we in the UN committed to halve at the beginning of this decade. These crises have the potential to bring great social and political instability to many regions. The sheer complexity and connectivity between these matters and human development make the task of addressing them very daunting. The progress made by the international community in this respect must be noted. However, we must all be mindful that whatever the perceived impact or fallout experienced by the economies of the world, the citizens of the small vulnerable States among us will be the worst hit and therefore continue to warrant the special attention of this body.

Mr. President,

The United Nations Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and its Impact on Development which convened last June in this General Assembly Hall brought renewed international attention to the magnitude of this crisis.

The outcome document confirmed and further emphasizes, that the crisis has had a particularly negative effect on developing countries, such as the Commonwealth of Dominica. The irony is that, though severely affected by it, these countries had absolutely no relationship or contribution to the cause of the crisis. A crisis which also threatens the realization of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In the Caribbean, it is estimated that the impact of the crisis has created the worst set of economic circumstances since the era of independence of the countries of the region; bringing with it depressed commodity prices, decline in agricultural export earnings; contraction of tourism revenues, retreating foreign direct investment, decreased access to external financing, and declining remittances, among others.

At the regional level, the Governments of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) are addressing the impacts of the crisis through the establishment in July of a Task Force which will allow the member States along with the Heads of the CARICOM Secretariat, the Caribbean Development Bank, the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank, the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, and the Caribbean Centre for Money and Finance to facilitate mobilization of funds and present a core set of proposals for dealing with this crisis.

Our Heads of Government have also agreed to the institution of a programme of collective enhancement of our financial services sector through improved national regulatory and supervisory systems, and through rationalization and consolidation, to ensure safety, soundness and stability in that sector. We concur with the call for the strengthening of institutional arrangements for international cooperation in tax matters. Furthermore, we endorse the recommendation of the Conference of the CARICOM Heads of State for consistent and non-discriminatory implementation of transparency requirements and international standards for exchange of information.

In order to adapt to the adverse impact of the financial crisis, it is crucial that Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Less Developed Countries (LDCs) receive the following: 1) speedy implementation of the decisions of the Conference, 2) assistance to facilitate economic diversification while responding to the crisis and the negative impact of climate change, 3) fiscal

support in view of already high debt burdens, 4) practical assistance from UN agencies through a compact framework, and 5) stimulus funds to be made available by bilateral and multilateral entities.

Mr. President,

With the onset of the financial crisis, there is now a wrong perception that the food crisis is over. Food insecurity continues unabated around the world and it is estimated that over a billion people are going to bed hungry every night. This is both unacceptable and unsustainable. The creation of the United Nations System High-level Task Force on Global Food Security was a timely and welcome initiative of the Secretary General and the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Increasing investments in agriculture in the developing nations is critical to addressing the food crisis.

We therefore welcome the G-8 pledge of \$15 billion over the next three years for enhancing food security but warn that the desired objective may not be achieved if harmful subsidies in agriculture continue to prevail in the developed countries.

Mr. President,

Completion of the Doha Development Agenda negotiations at the WTO takes on renewed importance as we seek solutions to the global financial crisis. An appropriate trade environment for a sustainable recovery for all is highly desirable.

It is in that spirit that we must renew our commitment to re-engage in the Doha negotiations with the declared objective towards its conclusion in 2010. The status quo has only served to further marginalize small and vulnerable States and led to the almost total collapse of some of their major industries, including sugar and bananas, which provided the livelihoods of numerous farming families and communities.

Our governments continue the struggle of developing their economies in the absence of the much needed foreign exchange which these industries generated. Increasing the competitiveness of developing countries and their effective participation in world trade underscores that Aid for Trade as a new and independent source of development financing must be at the centre of the trade and development agenda.

Mr. President,

Climate change has emerged as one of the leading challenges of our generation. If not arrested and sufficiently managed, its adverse impact has the potential to undermine human security, and the social and economic stability of all nations. All around us, we see evidence of escalating climate change, in the form of - severe weather, floods, drought, devastating hurricanes and cyclones, and rising sea levels.

Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are the most vulnerable to the negative impact of climate change. As a consequence, we find our countries on the front lines of this monumental challenge to humanity. In the Commonwealth of Dominica and several of the sister islands of the Caribbean situated in the hurricane belt, there have been and will continue to be an almost annual cycle of considerable damage to houses, roads, coastlines and other infrastructure. For many of our countries there is a constant struggle to achieve economic development and a higher quality of life for our people, only to find ourselves experiencing these heavy losses and having to routinely start all over again.

As global preparations for the critical Copenhagen Conference continue, the urgency to act to address climate change has become increasingly important. What has long been pointed out by the scientists has now been confirmed by those whose unsustainable production has precipitated an “Earth Crisis” which must be addressed if our planet is to survive. The General Assembly, in its resolution of 3rd June of this year, recognized as an additional dimension of the crisis the security implications of climate change. This is clearly evident for many small island states whose viability and very existence are threatened by conditions such as the rise in sea levels.

Mr. President,

The Commonwealth of Dominica is at the forefront of Nature Conservation. Upon the attainment of political independence in 1978, our country was aptly dubbed the “Nature Island of The Caribbean” in view of our unwavering commitment to the management and conservation of our abundant biodiversity, extensive national parks system, rich forest resources, mountain ranges, fresh water resources, and a pure marine environment.

At the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg, South Africa in September 2002, the then Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Dominica, The Honourable Pierre Charles proclaimed our country as the “Nature Island of the World”. Today in the presence of the world gathering in this august body I announce the Commonwealth of Dominica’s intention to make our country a “Model for Sustainable Development”. A cordial invitation is extended to the international community to contribute towards this noble venture.

The Commonwealth of Dominica continues to work closely within the framework of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) to continue to put forward our perspective, as climate change frontline states, to the negotiating table. We are contributing to a solution to the effects of climate change by pursuing measures at the national level to promote energy efficiency, reduce the consumption of fossil fuels, and to develop our geothermal potential for national energy needs as well as for possible export of clean energy to our neighbours, especially the French Overseas Departments of Guadeloupe and Martinique. Dominica is already generating 40% of its electricity by hydropower. We are in an advanced stage of geothermal energy development which by 2015 should enable us to reach the target of 100% electricity generation by renewable energy. We express our gratitude to France and the European Union for the commendable cooperation towards the shift to renewable energy.

The Government of the Commonwealth of Dominica is, therefore, encouraged by the many expressions of support for a successful outcome of the Copenhagen meeting made by world leaders at the High Level Event on Climate Change held a few days ago in this General Assembly Hall. There is an urgent need for a greater demonstration of political will in this

regard. I therefore urge every Head of State or Government to seize the moment to reach an agreement that will protect the inhabitants of this planet from one of the most serious challenges ever to confront humanity.

Mr. President,

The Commonwealth of Dominica remains concerned about the current economic situation in our sister island of Haiti. We recognize the important role of the UN Mission to Haiti in ensuring stability in that country. We commend all troop contributing States for their engagement in Haiti, and we appreciate the support of the Security Council in extending the mandate of the Mission. Haiti needs development assistance in order to consolidate the stability that MINUSTAH's presence has fostered, and to ensure the success of the peace building process. In this regard, we endorse and applaud the decision of the UN Secretary-General in May this year to appoint former US President Clinton as Special Envoy for Haiti. We hope that this appointment will advance the cause of rebuilding Haiti. The Commonwealth of Dominica through its actions, and also through CARICOM, will continue to do all in its power to advance the quality of life of the Haitian people.

Mr. President,

Central to my country's development thrust is a particular focus on the advancement of our indigenous people. Consistent with this priority of the United Nations, we support the continued and expanded efforts of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in the implementation of the measures contained in its recommendations. In this connection, we welcome the recommendations of the Eighth Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Women, on the economic development and human rights of indigenous peoples, and specific actions in relation to the Arctic region. The Government of the Commonwealth of Dominica continues to undertake important initiatives to improve social development for our indigenous Kalinago people.

Mr. President,

We gather every year in the General Debate in a true spirit of common resolve and partnership. This common resolve and partnership must assume greater meaning this year because the tasks before the international community are enormous and necessitate collective action.

However challenging the efforts are towards their solution, it seems evident that only genuine global cooperation and concerted multilateral action have the possibility of yielding favourable results. But committed multilateral action in face of these crises has so far proved to be elusive. A greater demonstration of political will should ensure multilateral action in confronting these crises as this is an absolute necessity for the survival of this planet.

I take this opportunity to recognize all the countries and organizations that have assisted the Commonwealth of Dominica and the more vulnerable States in our development thrust. Particular reference must be made to those developing countries, which, while dealing with their own domestic challenges, have extended a true fraternal hand of friendship. To all of you we express our most sincere gratitude.

We also reiterate the call of this General Assembly for an end of the US embargo against the Republic of Cuba and look forward to an early date for its removal.

Finally, Mr. President,

As we chart a most progressive development course for our future we should ensure that it includes the full implementation of the recommendations from the Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis. We should also make every effort to leave Copenhagen with a framework for a sound climate agreement that will protect the inhabitants of this planet, particularly the most vulnerable from one of the most serious challenges ever to confront humanity.

I thank you.