



SAINT LUCIA

STATEMENT BY

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Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Saint Lucia is pleased to join the other members of the United Nations family in congratulating you (His Excellency Miguel D'Escoto Brockman) on being elected as President of the 63rd Session of the General Assembly. Mr. President, we wish you every success as you guide these important deliberations at this most critical time.

We also wish to express our appreciation to your predecessor His Excellency Srgjan Kerim for the professional manner in which he spearheaded the work of the 62nd Session. At this juncture, we also wish to acknowledge the important work undertaken by Secretary-General His Excellency Ban Ki Moon and his team in continuing to promote the noble principles and values of the United Nations. We wish to express our continued support for your endeavors, and stand ready to offer our assistance and counsel as you pursue the implementation of the many mandates adopted by this General Assembly each year.

The MDGs and the Development Agenda

Mr. President,

We have passed the midpoint in our quest to achieve the ambitious but achievable "Millennium Development Goals" (MDGs) by the projected year, 2015. Since the adoption of this timetable in 2000, however, the global economy has experienced a number of shocks which have served to challenge our ability to meet the MDGs in the allotted time. We and the international community must redouble our efforts to meet these challenges by addressing them with serious conviction.

We face, as the Secretary-General has said, a "developmental emergency," and emergencies require immediate action. It is therefore imperative that the international community moves with the utmost urgency to enact measures to address the challenges which have emerged. Inaction or indifference will only threaten to reverse the gains already achieved in some areas. We must ensure that our annual reaffirmations on the right to development and the right to food, shelter, security, and peace do not ring hollow.

Mr. President, in spite of the numerous difficulties and challenges with which it is faced, Saint Lucia maintains its commitment to the realization of the MDGs by 2015, and will do all within its means to achieve this objective even as new difficulties arise. For this reason Saint Lucia's social indicators are fairly reasonable and reflect the investment that has been made in human development over the years

The reduction of poverty remains a top priority for my government, and in this regard increased resources have been made available to programmes and institutions dedicated to this objective.

In the Education Sector, universal access has already been achieved at the primary and secondary levels. Emphasis is currently being placed on quality improvement at the primary and secondary levels, and on expanded access at the tertiary level, as well as early childhood education. More attention is also being given to the higher drop out rate of young men from school.

In the area of health care, the reform of the Health Sector continues to be a priority, and significant progress continues to be made toward the achievement of free health care for all. Success continues to be recorded in respect of key indicators such as life expectancy, infant mortality and immunization coverage. Saint Lucia has exceeded the target of an infant mortality rate of 30 per 1,000 set by WHO for the Caribbean and there is 100% immunization coverage. At the same time the incidence of communicable disease has been significantly reduced although there is concern over chronic non communicable diseases.

The AIDS pandemic continues to be the focus of our attention, and with the assistance of regional and international partners, Saint Lucia has made important strides in addressing this challenge. Current HIV prevalence is 0.12%, and we continue to focus on education as one of the main instruments in this fight, even as we devote increased resources to programmes geared toward early detection, and the provision of free or subsidized anti-retroviral drugs.

Mr. President, Saint Lucia has already recorded success in respect of the achievement of some of the Millennium Development Goals. In spite of this success however, we will remain focused on the objective of achieving all the Goals by the target year of 2015. There are however two additional issues that are critical to development in Saint Lucia and that are not properly covered under the existing MDG framework:

- the first issue encompasses violence, crime and security. It is an issue that takes many forms, including the gender-based violence that should be incorporated into MDG3.
- the second issue is the issue of migration, in all its dimensions, including the impact of the emigration of skilled workers (especially teachers and nurses) on national development.

It is imperative that we also consider these two issues as they impact on the MDG's and development of Saintt Lucia and many other countries.

Climate Change

One particular challenge confronting us is the emergence of serious climate change and its deleterious impact on the environment. These conditions continue to disproportionately affect small island developing states such as Saint Lucia, and the other member states of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) whose national territories in the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans and in the Caribbean Sea are extremely vulnerable. Increased drought, on the one hand, and torrential rains and flooding on the other, are affecting all corners of the globe and serve as recipes for disaster and human suffering. These conditions are being attributed more and more to the unbridled and unsustainable use of fossil fuels, and the concomitant release of greenhouse gases.

Energy and Food Security

A second major challenge taxing our resolve, and also associated with fossil fuel use, is the astronomical rise in energy prices. Given the all pervasive nature of energy in the development equation, such increases affect all the elements and components of our development endeavours - from transportation to the development of small and medium enterprises, to food production and consumption.

Mr. President, the astronomical rise in energy prices has created a new challenge as the world seeks to replace fossil fuels with cleaner and more cost-effective bio fuels. The trouble with this approach is that the decreased availability of agricultural production for food has resulted in higher prices for the staple foods for people around the world, especially in developing countries, but also among the marginalized of the developed world. This trade-off – food for fuel – if not carefully balanced, could cause increased poverty, hunger and economic and social marginalization which would serve to exacerbate already unacceptable levels of poverty and hunger.

Notwithstanding, we are heartened by the renewed efforts and improvements in the renewable energy agenda, but lament the slow pace of their use in the developed countries, and the high cost of these technologies to developing countries. There must be a greater liberalization and availability of new technologies in order to allow developing countries more access to development models that will better sustain new development models. In the meantime we must redouble the international effort to reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases to the levels already accepted by the large majority of the members of the international community.

Mr. President, last July, I joined with my colleague CARICOM Heads of Government in reviewing the impact of rising global prices, the issues surrounding energy use, and climate change and the implications for the Region's food and nutrition security. Arising from our deliberations, we "emphasized the need for governments to provide the necessary budgetary support and incentives for investment in agriculture, particularly at this time," and "given the importance and the development implications of climate change," we agreed to the establishment of a Task Force on Climate Change to give direction for the way forward.

It is from this perspective that Saint Lucia and many other like-minded countries have continued to emphasize the urgent need to focus on development, based on sustainable economic growth as the most effective means of transforming developing countries to levels where they can realize their long term capacity for significant enhancement of the quality of life of their people. Accordingly, Saint Lucia reiterates its strong conviction that the UN should regard development as the most essential tool to eradicate poverty and to achieve the "Millennium Development Goals" (MDGs).

Financing for Development

Mr. President, as food prices and energy costs rise, development finance is becoming even less available. We appreciate the efforts of the countries that have met the established ODA target of 0.7% of GDP. We urge other countries in a position to do so to act quickly so that the target may not have to be shifted upwards due to increased poverty worldwide.

Of particular concern to us Mr. President is the difficulty facing the lower middle income group of countries of which Saint Lucia and many of the SIDS belong. In spite of their limited resources, the members of this group have initiated prudent economic measures and have been able to make significant strides in their efforts to bring a reasonable level of economic and social benefits to their people.

However, Mr. President, policies that are ill conceived and ill advised will continue to negate our efforts and reverse some of the gains that have been made, forcing a reclassification of our status. We look forward to meaningful progress at the Follow-up Conference on Financing for Development to be held in Doha later this year, and call on our development partners to give practical expression to the numerous commitments that have been offered in the past, but which remain unrealized.

In Doha too, Mr. President, we expect greater momentum on the question of trade and development. Many of our countries are characterized by small size and the associated vulnerabilities. While the products and services which we have to offer are few, they are nevertheless the source of our livelihood. The investments in these products and services are significant for our countries, and while the pressure of competition from larger and more diversified economies may force consideration of a wholesale shift in production focus, the economic dislocation which would result from pursuit of such a strategy would be too overwhelming.

Youth Development

In addition, Mr. President, as small as our growing populations may be, the youth sector is a sizable portion of our society and they need to be given hope. The best avenue is through education, and the development of Small and Medium Enterprises. Many countries have developed through that route, but having developed they appear to want to close that avenue and make it a one way street. We therefore need the trade links to be open and fair, with greater consideration to the very small states, so that we too can meet the hopes and aspirations of our young; and; up to now, patient populations. In this respect, we expect UNIDO to play a more meaningful role in this effort.

South- South Cooperation

Mr. President, South-South cooperation continues to be a significant component of Saint Lucia's approach to development. Saint Lucia continues to benefit from the generous economic and technical cooperation among developing countries within and outside of the Caribbean region, including Cuba, Trinidad and Tobago, Brazil and Mexico, to name a few, and we are developing closer cooperation with our other Latin American neighbours.

We therefore applaud the establishment of the South-South Fund for Development and Humanitarian Assistance approved at the 2005¹ Second South Summit in Qatar as a financing mechanism to assist developing countries in economic, social, health and educational development, as well as in the alleviation of hunger and poverty and the impact of natural disasters.

We applaud the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) for the convening of the First Biennial Development Cooperation Forum earlier this year which highlighted the effectiveness of South-South Cooperation in harnessing the resources of developing countries in support of their own development efforts.

While developing countries have made great strides in financing their own development and the development of other countries of the South, greater cooperation in the area of technology transfer, particularly capacity building and technical assistance is required from the North. Capacity building, particularly amongst the youth, is crucial to the development of the skills required to implement our commitments to achieve the MDGs. We recognize the valuable role that both South-South and North-South cooperation play in the advancement of the development agenda. However, we know that triangular cooperation can be an equally useful and cost effective tool for furthering our development objectives. We therefore welcome efforts in this area. Critical also to the realization of the MDGs is the delivery of the aid commitment to developing countries without the burdensome conditionalities that are a typical feature of international programmes of development assistance.

We therefore call on all Member States to reinvigorate their efforts and obligations in assisting countries in the South to meet their development needs. In the meantime, the Government of Saint Lucia is doing its part and has committed itself to mobilizing its domestic resources, and is working assiduously to attract private capital to assist in advancing its development agenda.

Regional matters (Haiti)

Mr. President, the sustainable development of our sister CARICOM country of Haiti continues to be a formidable challenge faced by our region and the wider international community. It is one that requires the implementation of a long-term assistance program which ensures that economic and social recovery take root and that the people of that country can be assured of a brighter future.

We applaud the Government of Haiti for its successful completion of the national growth and poverty reduction strategy focusing on improving democratic governance, security and justice, and the delivery of basic services. We call on the international community to assist Haiti in the speedy implementation of the national growth and poverty reduction strategy.

Saint Lucia is pleased to note Haiti's continued efforts at achieving democratic governance, and welcomes the decisions of the Security Council to extend the mandate of the MINUSTAH in the interest of Haiti's political and social stability.

We continue to call for the sustained release of pledged development resources so that the Government and people of Haiti may continue to meaningfully, and in a sustainable manner, undertake measures to confront the numerous challenges to the development of their country.

Republic of China (Taiwan)

Mr. President, Saint Lucia's relationship with its partners is based on a commitment to mutual respect and understanding for each other. In this vein, Saint Lucia pays tribute to the Government and people of the Republic of China (Taiwan), a democratic country which has continued to abide by the very principles that the United Nations hold dear, seeking to nurture and preserve human rights and development.

We acknowledge the contribution which the Republic of China (Taiwan) has made to international development by its provision of substantial development assistance to

developing countries in the spirit of South-South cooperation. The Government of Taiwan has provided significant cooperation assistance to Saint Lucia and other states in the areas of education, health, agriculture and tourism.

We are also heartened by recent bilateral discussions which would serve to reduce tension in the Taiwan straits, and result in an increase in economic cooperation, investment, and transportation links. Mr. President, natural disasters, epidemics and food and energy crises know no borders. The 23 million people in Taiwan are inextricably linked to the world scene and have the same responsibilities and obligations as others to collaborate in the prevention of global catastrophes. We hope therefore that this August body will take this fact into consideration and allow them to meaningfully participate in the UN specialized agencies in the fight against these catastrophes.

Peace and Security

Mr. President, Saint Lucia is seriously concerned about the proliferation of small arms in our part of the world. The presence of small arms in our region poses serious challenges for the security and stability of our societies. As we struggle to address this problem within our limited resources, we call on those states that are engaged in the production and trade of small arms and ammunition to enact appropriate measures to curb the illicit trade which threatens the stability and security of our societies.

Security Council Reform

Mr. President, Saint Lucia remains concerned about the pace at which the matter of reform of the United Nations Security Council is proceeding.

Reform of the Security Council has been on the agenda of the UN for much too long. We continue to support the view that it is time for the Security Council to be more democratic, making it better able to deal with the increasing and more complex issues more reflective of post 1948 reality. In that respect, Saint Lucia supports the call at a minimum for a permanent seat on the Council of the African continent, just as the other continents.

Recent events are providing vivid illustration of the need for reform of the Security Council. Large size, military power, economic power, or largest populations are not in themselves sufficient criteria for a permanent seat on the Council. Adherence to the principles enshrined in the Charter of this body should be paramount over all others.

Our Aim

Mr. President: Saint Lucia is a small country with resources which would fail to register in global terms. Yet, small as we are, our people have hopes, aspirations and ambitions like any other. Moreover we hold the firm belief that we have the capacity to contribute to the world in a measure way beyond our size. We are probably best at Economics, (working miracles with limited resources), and Literature, (where our aspirations are clearly articulated), - having two Nobel Laureates in these areas. We hold the view that our limited resources should be utilized and focused on improving the quality of life of our people – in education, health, social services, and in economic opportunity. These are our primary aims – and we believe them to be in conformity with those of this eminent organization.

I thank you
