

COMMONWEALTH OF DOMINICA



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

BY

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**PRESIDENT
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COMMONWEALTH OF DOMINICA**

AT

**THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE
SIXTY-NINTH SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**New York
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Please check against delivery

Salutation:

The President of the General Assembly, Mr. Secretary General, Heads and Members of Delegations, Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I begin by congratulating H.E. Sam Kutesa, former Foreign Minister of Uganda on his election as President of the 69th Session of this General Assembly. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank H.E. Dr. John Ashe for his leadership of the 68th Session; and to salute Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his continued efforts in promoting peace, security, and development throughout the world.

Mr. President:

Dominica is among six (6) Small Island Independent States in the Caribbean, which together with three (3) Non Independent Small Island territories constitute the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). These OECS states are not simply Small Island Developing States, they are very Small Island Developing States and therefore among the most vulnerable members of this United Nations family.

SIDS

Twenty years after the adoption of the Barbados Program of Action (BPOA) and ten years after the approval of the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation (MSI), most of the commitments made to promote sustainable development in SIDS are yet to be delivered. However, we remain hopeful that the recently concluded Third UN Conference on SIDS, in Apia, Samoa, will be a watershed moment for SIDS. We expect that the outcome of the Conference will create a new dispensation to address the implementation gaps that continue to stymie the move towards sustainable development in SIDS.

Mr. President:

I wish to take this opportunity, to extend our congratulations to the Government and people of Samoa for having hosted a major international conference. Their tenacity, determination and commitment is a demonstration of what can be achieved by SIDS notwithstanding their many challenges.

One major outcome of the SIDS Conference in Samoa was the historic establishment of an all SIDS, that is a SIDS – SIDS initiative to create an international organization to serve as a platform for the development of sustainable energy in SIDS namely - SIDS DOCK.

On September 1, 2014, a treaty formally establishing SIDS DOCK as an international organization was opened for signatures. Twenty of the thirty members of the Alliance of Small Island States, AOSIS have signed on to the treaty.

As Chair of the SIDS DOCK Steering Committee, the Government of Dominica wishes to thank the host country, Samoa, the other Member States who are signatories to the treaty, our partners:– Denmark, Japan, United Nations Development Programme(UNDP), the World Bank, United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the Clinton Foundation, the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Program (SPREP), the Caribbean Community

Climate Change Centre (5Cs), the SIDS DOCK Secretariat and all the volunteers, for making this historic event possible.

The MDGs and the Post-2015 Agenda

Unfortunately the MDG's and post 2015 agenda has not progressed at a pace that those of us from SIDs would have liked. Almost 15 years after the declaration of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), only a few in the developing world have registered tangible gains. The majority, continue to wait for the promised improvements in their living conditions.

Notwithstanding, Dominica has been able to achieve most of the MDGs. Notable among our achievements are the progress that we have made in reducing poverty, improving access to education, ensuring environmental sustainability and building strong bilateral and multilateral partnerships.

Mr. President:

Our progress in poverty reduction has been noted by the Caribbean Development Bank which stated in its 2010 report on Dominica that:

“...the level of poverty [in Dominica] has fallen from 39 percent in 2003 to 28.8 percent in 2009. Absolute poverty, as measured by the indigence rate, has also declined from 10 percent in 2003 to 3.1 percent in 2009.”

Our achievements in education have also surpassed the targets set by the MDGs. Recognizing the importance of education to our development agenda, Dominica continues to make major investments in improving access to quality education for our people. To date, we boast of universal access to education at the early childhood, primary and secondary levels, and access to post-secondary education is available to all secondary school graduates.

Sustainable Use of Natural Resources

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Dominica has always been guided by the principle of sustainable use of its natural resources and protection of its physical environment. It is for these reasons that Dominica has been called the Nature Island of the Caribbean. We therefore have much that we can share with the UN family of nations on the subject of sustainable use of natural resources.

In our efforts to protect and ensure environmental sustainability, and to rid our country of its reliance on fossil fuels for generating electricity, the Government of Dominica has invested, and continues to invest, in renewable energy. Today, about 20% of the island's electricity needs are met from 'clean' hydropower.

Additionally, however, the Government has been pursuing the development of the country's geothermal resources. To date, the Government has invested over US\$20M in its geothermal development efforts. The first production and reinjection wells have been completed and the results of the Flow Tests indicate that this geothermal reservoir has a capacity to generate sufficient electricity for domestic consumption and also for export to the neighboring French Territories of Martinique and Guadeloupe. The first plant for purely domestic consumption is expected to be commissioned in 2016.

Dominica's development achievements in general and attainment of the MDGs in particular, have been realized through the strong, visionary and compassionate leadership of Prime Minister Hon. Roosevelt Skerrit and his Cabinet, complimented by our hard working citizens and the kind cooperation of our development partners.

Our partnerships with the European Union, the United States of America, Japan and other developed countries have all contributed significantly to the progress we have been able to make thus far. The recent approval by the World Bank of the Climate Change Resilience Program to undertake a number of infrastructural works designed to transform Dominica into a climate resilient and low carbon developing country is expected, among other benefits, to positively impact agricultural productivity and food security in our rural communities.

South-South cooperation with partners from the developing countries notably The People's Republic of China, Cuba, Morocco, Venezuela, and the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of our America (ALBA), have been able to complement the reducing assistance from traditional partners. We embrace all our development partners and look forward to the deepening and strengthening of our partnerships for the benefits of all our people.

Climate Change and Other Challenges

Mr. President:

In spite of these achievements, we are a long way from where we aspire to be. The spectre of the deadly Ebola disease, and the scourge of HIV/AIDS and Non Communicable Diseases (NCD's) have the potential to significantly impact our people and threaten the gains made so far by small island developing states. This myriad of challenges, therefore, call for collective global action to protect the gains that small island states like Dominica have been able to achieve over the past two (2) decades, and to lay a path for development that is sustainable and people-focused.

Additionally, Mr. President, the impact of climate change remains an existential threat to people throughout the world, who call Small Island States their homes. The location, level of development and vulnerability of our islands make them very susceptible to the impact of climate change. Very often, we refer to climate change and its effects as a phenomenon that is to impact our global community at some future date. The unfortunate reality is that SIDS have already been suffering from the impact of climate change.

The increasing severity of storms and hurricanes are becoming more prevalent, and with every strike, claim lives and threaten our development efforts. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA), in its 2008 publication, the Caribbean has the second greatest risk for hurricanes throughout the world. The report also highlights the increased frequency of tropical cyclones in our region.

Mr. President:

The islands of the Caribbean are also prone to earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, droughts, torrential rains with accompanying landslides and flash flooding. We in the Caribbean, therefore, have been on the receiving end of the impact of climate change for decades.

A case in point is the impact of hurricane Ivan, a category 3 system which devastated the island of Grenada on September 7, 2004. Hurricane Ivan exposed the vulnerability that is inherent in SIDS. Twenty-eight lives were lost and 18,000 people were left without shelter, food and belongings.

A post Ivan study conducted by the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) reported that: “The Macro-Economic Assessment of the Damages Caused by Hurricane Ivan, which wreaked havoc on Grenada inflicted damages totaling US\$1 billion, more than twice the value of that country’s GDP.”

In more recent times, on December 24, 2013, outside of the traditional hurricane season, the Caribbean Islands of Dominica, Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines were severely affected by a trough system that brought with it heavy rains and high winds. The slow moving weather system left behind approximately USD 128 million worth of direct impact.

Within less than 12 hours, each of these countries suffered significant loss: Dominica - USD 17M; 3.4% of GDP; Saint Lucia - USD 19M; 1.4% of GDP; and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines – USD 93 M; 12.8%. The indirect impacts, which include the loss of agricultural production and interruptions in other economic activities such as tourism, would increase the overall effect significantly.

The most devastating hurricane to hit Dominica in living memory was Hurricane David on 29th of August 1979, a category five (5) hurricane, which left the island devastated as if by WAR, resulting in forty-three (43) deaths and with all public utilities, infrastructure, sixty (60) percent of homes, roads and sea defences totally destroyed.

These natural disasters affect the daily lives of our people and significantly retard our efforts to bring about social and economic development. We therefore call on all Member States of the United Nations to take immediate actions to approve a legally binding agreement to reduce the impact of climate change. The climate change agenda must be an integral part of the post-2015 agenda.

Sustainable Economic Development:

The creation of wealth and the generation of economic growth are essential for the eradication of poverty and the improvement of the quality of life of our people. Economic growth and development, however, should be inclusive and sustainable. The creation of jobs and the delivery of social services should touch the lives of all our people, especially the indigenous people, the elderly, the disadvantaged, the disabled, the vulnerable, and those people who are excluded from mainstream society. The development of agriculture, tourism, the energy sector and industrial development should therefore be inclusive and sustainable.

Dominica, therefore, joins the rest of the Caribbean Community and “call for development partners to conduct their macroeconomic and trade policies in a way that would facilitate opportunities for SIDS to promote economic growth, reduce existing income gaps, reduce the levels of poverty and achieve their development aspirations”. These policies should include, but not be limited to, a change in the criteria for the graduation of SIDS from preferential access to

multilateral concessional financing.

This new criteria must take into account the inherent vulnerabilities of SIDS and the need for building resilience to the impact of climate change and the vagaries of global financial, economic and trading systems. Any measure, therefore, which inhibits any Member State of the United Nations family from fully integrating into the global financial and trading system, should be removed.

Cuba

Mr. President,

In this vein, the economic embargo against our brothers and sisters in Cuba continues to be of concern to us in the Caribbean. This unilateral action by the United States of America against our sister Caribbean Island, whatever the excuses may have been fifty-five (55) years ago, cannot be justified today, nor can the sufferings of our brothers and sisters in the Republic of Cuba as a result of their exclusion for 55 years from the world banking and trading system, be defended.

It is well established that whatever the objectives were 55 years ago, they are not likely to be achieved through the continuation of this embargo and the Government of Dominica therefore call on the United States of America to heed the call of the General Assembly to lift the embargo against Cuba and to support the full integration of the Cuban people into the global financial and trading systems.

The embargo, notwithstanding, the Cuban people continue to make a tremendous contribution to human development across the globe. For decades, Cuba has been training doctors, nurses, engineers, and other professionals and deploying them, providing technical assistance to developing countries as part of its South-South cooperation.

Cuba also offers professional training in various disciplines to thousands of students from all over the developing world.

Cuba continues to add its voice in the fight against terrorism and drug trafficking in the Caribbean and the rest of the world. It is for this reason that Dominica fails to comprehend the continued listing of Cuba as a State sponsor of terrorism. We therefore call for the removal of Cuba from the list of countries that sponsor terrorism. Our efforts in this region should be focus instead on combating the real threats to global peace and security.

Ukraine

Similarly, Mr. President the events unfolding in Ukraine are a proxy tug of war between the European Union and the United States on the one hand and the Russian Federation on the other hand. The Ukrainian people are the victims of this contest, this throwback to the Cold War. In 1918, the United Kingdom, confronted with the question of Irish nationalism, resolved the matter through the ballot box with a county by county referendum on the future of Ireland.

Most counties opted for independence but five (5) counties opted for continued union with the United Kingdom, and three (3) years later the island was partitioned into the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland which remained part of the United Kingdom. Currently the United Kingdom is faced with the question of Scottish independence and once again, only last week on the 18th of September, the United Kingdom resorted to the ballot box to determine the matter. While the supporters of the YES campaign will be disappointed in the results, the real victors are not the supporters of the No campaign but democracy itself.

With this experience the United Kingdom is uniquely placed to counsel the European Union, the United States, Kiev, and Moscow to accord to the people of Ukraine the same opportunity to decide their destiny for themselves, according to their regional preferences, without coercion either from the East or from the West. Such an approach would end the paralysis in the Security Council creating a real partnership between the United States, the Russian Federation and China, thus enabling the United Nation to fulfill its mandate to assist in conflict resolution, combat the greatest threat facing the world today, that is armed conflict, and terrorism, and create a more peaceful international community.

Conclusion

Mr. President: In conclusion, I wish to reiterate to this General Assembly that the impact of climate change is a major threat to the developmental efforts and to the very existence of Small Island Developing States. The incidence of severe weather conditions continues to impact Island States in the worse ways possible. Our ability to survive depends not only on the individual and collective actions taken by SIDS but by the actions of the rest of the international community.

A legally binding outcome to climate change negotiations is a critical component in a series of actions to be taken by the Member States. This should be buttressed by a post-2015 agenda that engenders poverty eradication, increased access to education and training, healthcare, potable water and sanitation, and promotes sustainable and inclusive economic development.

The outcomes of the Third UN Conference on SIDS in Samoa should serve as a blueprint for the growth and development of SIDS. This should include the restructuring of the international financial and trading architecture that takes into account the vulnerabilities and special circumstances of SIDS. This new dispensation will allow for the development of SIDS through sustainable agriculture, tourism, and inclusive industrial development.

These efforts, however, must be propelled by sustainable energy that maximizes the use of renewable energy resources in the most energy efficient manner that are SIDS appropriate.

Mr. President I wish all delegates to this 69th session every success in their deliberations.

I thank you.