



The Honourable Justin L. Simon QC
Attorney-General and Minister of Legal Affairs
Antigua and Barbuda

**ADDRESS TO THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

On the occasion of the
General Debate
of the 61st Session
United Nations General Assembly

27 September, 2006
United Nations
New York

Please check against delivery.

Madam President

Distinguished Heads

Excellencies

Antigua and Barbuda joins the other members of the United Nations in congratulating Her Excellency Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Kalifa on being elected President of the 61st Session of the United Nations General Assembly. Madam President, we wish you success in all your efforts and assure you of our full co-operation.

I would also wish to thank and congratulate your predecessor Mr. Jan Eliasson for his profound leadership of the 60th regular session of the General Assembly.

I wish also to convey the appreciation of the Government of Antigua and Barbuda to Mr. Kofi Annan for his many years of service to the United Nations and for his overall dedication to the pursuit of world peace and development. Every year brings new and unique challenges which add to the burdens of the office of the Secretary General, and this past year has been no exception. In bidding Mr. Annan farewell, on behalf of the Government and people of Antigua and Barbuda, I pay tribute to his indomitable courage over the past ten years, and say to him: success is never final and failure is never fatal; it is courage that counts, and you Sir, have risen to the challenge when it counted most.

Madam President,

Among the many accomplishments of the Twentieth Century was the establishment of the United Nations. And among the accomplishments of the United Nations in its 60 years of existence is its advocacy of decolonization by peaceful means; its advancement of the concept of sovereignty as a natural right of all nations and all peoples; and the awareness it has brought to the international community that in this era of globalization the majority of humanity are afflicted not by inter-state wars, but by the ravages of poverty, hunger, disease, environmental degradation, and human rights violations.

We are aware of the awesome task of implementing the reform measures for this organization. We are however encouraged by the significant achievements made since the adoption of the Outcome Document of the 2005 World Summit. We are pleased that some progress has been made in areas such as the establishment of the Human Rights Council, the Central Emergency Fund, the launching of the Peace Building Commission, and agreement on a counter terrorism strategy.

Respectfully, Antigua and Barbuda joins this community of nations in underscoring the importance of social and economic development, basic human rights and their importance to the maintenance of international peace and security, mutual respect, and lasting goodwill among nations.

Madam President,

Slavery is today perhaps the most under-recognized crime against humanity in spite of its vicious displacement and brutal treatment of an entire race. Next year, 2007, marks the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the trans-Atlantic triangular slave trade. The fourteen (14) member countries of the Caribbean Community, whose people are principally of African slave descent, are committed to bringing this anniversary to the attention of the world, and we look forward to your unanimous support in the United Nations General Assembly of our forthcoming resolution, and your joining us in the appropriate recognition of this event which foreshadowed the abolition of slavery.

Madam President,

In a few weeks, on November 1st, Antigua and Barbuda will celebrate twenty five (25) years of political independence. As we take stock of our challenges and experiences in nation-building and our actions in attempting to achieve and maintain a decent standard of living for our people, our progress report is one mixed with successes and failures punctuated with hope and frustration. Madam President, the reality is that we are a politically independent, small-island nation with limited resources, existing in an economically interdependent yet fiercely competitive world.

Our challenges are many, but, emerging from a colonial dominated past, we are indeed proud of our history as an independent democratic state where people of whatever race creed or political affiliation are free to express and exercise all basic and fundamental human rights, which are inherent features of the United Nations legal framework. However, for a politically independent nation like ours to survive in this economically interdependent world, this requires effective multilateralism and the forging of real international partnerships. In other words, our future depends on our ability to work well with each other within a spirit of understanding and respect, given our diverse cultures and economies.

Madam President,

Antigua and Barbuda is acutely aware of the importance of partnerships and of the necessity of working within a multilateral framework to meet the challenges we face as a young developing nation. This brings me to the importance of the United Nations in its role as a melting pot of ideas for constructive and positive action. Madam President, the UN's development agenda is an ambitious, noble, worthy, and necessary one. Were we to accomplish the goals we have set within the specified timeframes, it would be a testament to the greatness of humanity. My government and people therefore support any process of reform of the United Nations that will enhance the level of representation in all its principal organs, increase its effectiveness, and improve its legitimacy. It should be more democratic in its representation, more reflective of modern-day geopolitical realities, and more timely and effective in delivering on the outcomes of its many international conferences, summits, and agreements, including, of course, the Millennium Declaration.