



SAINT LUCIA

STATEMENT BY

HONOURABLE STEPHENSON KING

PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER FOR FINANCE,

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, HOME AFFAIRS

AND NATIONAL SECURITY

OF SAINT LUCIA

TO THE 62ND SESSION

OF THE UNITED NATIONS

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(Check against delivery)

Mr. President,
Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The pleasure is mine at this juncture, to join the other members of the United Nations family in congratulating you, Mr. President on your election as President of the 62nd Session of the General Assembly. We wish you success in all your efforts and assure you of our full cooperation.

We also wish to express our appreciation to your predecessor Her Excellency Sheika Haya Rashad Al-Khalifa for the diligent manner in which she spearheaded the work of the 61st Session of this august body.

In similar vein, we express our continued support for the endeavours of Secretary-General His Excellency Ban Ki-moon. We are confident that he will continue to provide committed leadership to this Organization in the defence and promotion of its noble principles and values in every corner of the globe.

Mr. President:

I begin my address on a sad note. It is with much pain that I must inform this body that the person who brought Saint Lucia to Independence and consequently to this august body, and who, but for the will of the Almighty would have addressed you today, Sir John George Melvin Compton, our first and latest Prime Minister was laid to rest in Saint Lucia last Tuesday, September 18. Our nation and region suffered a great loss, but we remain committed to seize every opportunity to carry on his life's work of – "Aiding the cause that needs assistance – Fighting the wrong that needs resistance", and in so doing, continue to honour him. What I am about to say reflects his thoughts on and aspirations for this Assembly, and for the United Nations Organisation in general.

Mr. President

We note that a significant part of our journey towards the realization of the Millennium Development Goals has been covered, in terms of time, and that there has been some achievement in some respects to date. However it is also true that only mixed progress, regionally and internationally, has been recorded so far, and millions still continue to live in conditions of abject poverty, despite the commitments which were made in 2000 and 2005. The sad fact is that a great deal of work still remains to be done and urgently so, if we are to realize the achievement of the MDGs, and to see real changes in the conditions of existence for such large numbers of people.

We would be well advised to embark upon a period of serious reflection and stocktaking, an exercise involving an honest assessment of our achievements and failures, with a view to repositioning ourselves as necessary, to ensure that we achieve the noble objectives set out in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by the projected year, 2015.

Progress with regard to the MDGs

Mr. President,

On our own front, Saint Lucia has made significant strides over the years towards the achievement of the MDGs. We intend to continue on a steady path towards that end. Not only has the country attained universal primary education, but a programme of universal access to free secondary education for our young citizens has been introduced.

Saint Lucia's progress in the health sector is also evident. Over the last twenty five years the country has experienced significant improvements in most health-related indicators including life expectancy, immunization coverage, and infant mortality, while significant reductions have been experienced in respect of communicable diseases, as well as lifestyle-related illnesses. A universal programme of free health care is currently in the early stages of implementation.

Over the years, too, Saint Lucia has consistently worked toward a reduction in incidences of non-communicable diseases. Serious attention has also been given to combating the HIV/AIDS problem which remains a major challenge to Saint Lucia and other countries in the Caribbean region. Efforts to address this issue are being pursued mainly through education (including the elimination of stigma associated with this disease), early detection and treatment programmes, and the provision of free or subsidized anti-retroviral drugs.

As a small island developing state, Saint Lucia finds it beneficial to undertake this daunting task through regional and international cooperation. Accordingly, through the Pan Caribbean Partnership against HIV/AIDS, we collaborate with other countries in the wider Caribbean region in addressing the pandemic. While this regional mechanism - which includes the 15 members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) as well as other countries in the wider Caribbean region—has facilitated our cooperative approach to addressing this challenge, it is clear that increased and sustained international cooperation is critical to our efforts, if we are to succeed in combatting this disease. In this regard we welcome the assistance being provided by the Global Fund to combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis, working with other partners, and look forward to its continued support.

Mr. President:

Let me take this opportunity to thank our traditional friends and donors such as the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, France, the European Union, and the Commonwealth (to name the most prominent), who have over the years, provided much financial and technical assistance to our country and to the region. We also welcome the contribution of those other States and Institutions which have demonstrated their readiness to work with us in the realization of our development objectives. We are, of course, always willing to develop new beneficial relationships and collaborate with all who understand and appreciate our efforts and principles. In this regard we take special note of the announcement by Norway of its pledge of one billion US Dollars over 10 years to support the Millennium Goals on child and maternal support.

South- South Cooperation

Mr. President

Within the context of South-South Cooperation Saint Lucia will continue to work with other developing-country partners in its quest for economic and social development. In light of the positive benefits gained from cooperation programmes with those partners, we remain convinced that, according to the UNDP Administrator's report on this issue, South-South Cooperation is one of the "main drivers of development effectiveness, requiring its integration in the development cooperation activities of all the organizations in the UN system". Saint Lucia therefore welcomes the UN's continued support for efforts geared towards strengthening and advancing South-South Cooperation. We are convinced that this cooperation modality should be strengthened in partnership with our developed-country partners and other stakeholders, and should therefore complement rather than substitute North-South Cooperation.

Regionalism

Mr. President,

The Government of Saint Lucia reiterates its commitment to the ideals of regionalism and to the deepening of the integration process within our region. Saint Lucia continues to partner with other sister states of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), and the wider Caribbean Community (CARICOM) to develop mechanisms (including the Eastern Caribbean States Economic Union, and the Caribbean Community Single Market and Economy) to enhance the prospects for improving the quality of life of our people. We therefore welcome the assistance of this august body and that of those who have traveled the road to regionalism before us.

Mr. President,

Saint Lucia is pleased to note that Haiti's march toward democratic governance, re-commenced just over one year ago, continues to be assisted and sustained by the generous efforts of the international community. While we had hoped for a longer mandate period for the MINUSTAH in Haiti, we however accept the decision of the Security Council to extend that mandate to enable it to continue to work towards ensuring that Haiti's political and social stability are restored and maintained. Under no circumstance should Haiti be left stranded in midstream, as the consequences would be too catastrophic to contemplate. We continue, therefore, 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, address the numerous challenges facing their country.

Financing for Development

Mr. President,

Saint Lucia places great importance on the follow-up of the international development agenda espoused in the Monterrey Consensus (on Financing for Development). Given the plethora of challenges confronting developing countries such as Saint Lucia in this increasingly globalized and inequitable international economy, financing for development continues to be key to the achievement of the MDGs and the Internationally Agreed Development Goals (IADGs).

Mr. President

Saint Lucia recognizes the important commitments made over the years by some developed country partners with regard to development finance. We also appreciate the pledges made to significantly improve on the level of Official Development Assistance (ODA) to achieve the goal of 0.7% of their Gross Domestic Product. Moreover, we are pleased about the G-8's decision in 2005 to forgive the debt of some African countries, and their more recent decision to double development assistance to Africa.

We lament however that despite these commitments, development assistance declined in 2006. Moreover, development financing continued to be subjected to conditionalities imposed by donors, and failed to meet and support the nationally defined priorities of developing countries.

It is our hope that the 2008 Doha Review Conference will seriously address these concerns in light of the significance of financing for development at this stage of our journey toward 2015.

UN Reform

Mr. President,

Saint Lucia is well aware of the increasing interdependence which characterises this international community, the importance of building partnerships, and the need to work within a multilateral framework to enable us to meet the challenges of this century. For this reason, we welcome the continued attempts at seeking ways to re-position the United Nations system to better fulfill its mandate in accordance with its Charter. While we are conscious of the magnitude of the task of reforming the UN, we remain confident that member states will bring to bear the requisite political will on the process.

Security Council Reform

Mr. President

Saint Lucia continues to underscore the importance of social and economic development, basic human rights, mutual respect and goodwill among nations, and their relevance to the maintenance of international peace and security. For these reasons we are concerned that Peace and Security remain the exclusive preserve of the Security Council and a few select Member States

Saint Lucia continues to support reform and expansion of the Security Council to make it more representative. It is our hope that this reform would reflect the role and contribution of developing countries in helping to resolve the ever growing and increasingly complex challenges of today's world.

Relations with Republic of China (Taiwan)

Mr. President,

Many, if not all of our countries celebrate our sovereignty with pomp, ceremony and pride, and in accordance with that sovereignty, we take our seat in this august body. The rules and requirements for membership are spelt out in the Charter of our noble institution, without exception.

Within this august body our relationship with our partners is based on a commitment to the principle of mutual respect and understanding. For this reason we recognize that the Republic of China (Taiwan), a democratic country of over 23 million people, has continued to abide by the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, though not a member of the United Nations. Taiwan has made significant contributions to global development by providing economic and technical assistance to other developing countries in their pursuit of development and their attainment of the MDGs.

Mr. President,

We believe that sovereignty is derived from the will of peoples, and from the realization or actualization of the right to self determination. We are therefore saddened that the will of the people of Taiwan expressed by their duly elected representatives, continues to be ignored by this body. Saint Lucia therefore looks forward to the day when Taiwan will assume its place alongside other countries of the world in the halls of this Organisation.

Peace and Security

Mr. President,

For small states peace and security are critical to our sustainable development. Thus, the spread of small arms to our region continues to be an especially disturbing issue, and is a major contributing factor to crime and insecurity. This is particularly ironic given the fact that neither arms nor ammunition are produced in our region. We therefore call on those states that produce small arms and ammunition to enact appropriate measures to reduce the illicit export which threatens the security and stability of the Caribbean.

Climate Change

Mr. President,

Saint Lucia and other Small Island Developing States (SIDS) continue to express concerns about our extreme vulnerability to the adverse impacts of climate change. Small islands and low-lying coastal areas are threatened daily by the impact of sea level rise, while others are already experiencing the untold effects created by the increase in the melting of polar ice, and the consequent loss of significant portions of landmass. For us, this climate change issue is directly related to our development. It threatens the very core of our social, economic and political security. It threatens our very existence.

The dangers we face as a result of the hazardous level of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere are well known and documented. Urgent, resolute action is therefore required to reverse this situation.

Mr. President

Saint Lucia welcomes the efforts currently being made to place the issue of Climate Change more visibly on the agenda of the United Nations. We acknowledge the recent G-8 commitment to work positively within the framework of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to address the issue. We maintain the view that this important issue should be discussed within the appropriate fora in order not to lose sight of the real development-related objectives which vulnerable small island developing countries like Saint Lucia are seeking to promote.

Saint Lucia joins with other members of the Alliance of Small Island States in calling for the problems of sea level rise and climate change to be addressed as a matter of urgency. We will continue to play our part through the development of appropriate National Development Strategies, and the creation of mechanisms to enable us to mitigate against and adapt to the adverse impact of climate change. We stress however, that the largest producers of greenhouse gases must bear the responsibility for the damage being caused to the global environment, and in particular to the vulnerable countries whose sustainability and very existence are increasingly threatened by their actions.

Mauritius Strategy

Mr. President

We remain concerned that the international community has yet to honour its responsibility and commitment to the full implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. We insist on the urgent and proper mainstreaming of the Strategy into the respective work programmes of the United Nations agencies and International Conventions. We look forward to the 13th Meeting of the Conference of Parties in Bali, Indonesia in December of this year, where we hope significant negotiations will be launched with a view to seriously addressing the disastrous effects of Climate Change on SIDS. It is our wish that this Conference of Parties should seek to achieve substantial and legally binding emission reductions in the shortest possible period, as well as explore ways to significantly increase the level of resources available to developing countries, and to the SIDS in particular, to assist in adapting to the impacts of climate change.

WTO/DOHA

Mr. President

Whilst economic and trade policy reform, in principle, hold much promise for small developing countries, the international community must understand that the "one size fits all" approach to trade arrangements is inappropriate and unrealistic and will not advance the cause of equitable global economic development. This approach has led to a reversal, in many small states, of the progress made through hard work and sacrifice by their populations. This is most evident in the case of Saint Lucia and other small banana and sugar producing countries of the Eastern Caribbean. The mindless application of inappropriate rules has caused much pain among the same populations who are being challenged to meet the MDGs. Saint Lucia therefore reiterates its call for the establishment of a set of trading rules flexible enough to take into account the concerns of Small States to assist them in promoting economic development, provide opportunities for their people and consequently to assist them in achieving the MDGs by the stipulated deadline date.

High Level Plenary Meeting on Children

Lastly, Mr. President, and looking towards the future...

Children are the future and poverty impacts children disproportionately, seriously affecting their ability to achieve. Unless we can all maintain the development momentum achieved by previous generations the future of our children, and indeed our societies will be characterized by insecurity.

Saint Lucia therefore looks forward to the High Level Plenary Meeting devoted to the follow-up to the outcome of the Special Session on Children, to be convened in December to evaluate progress made in the implementation of the Declaration and Plan of Action, bearing in mind that several of the time-bound and quantified commitments should have already been met. We in Saint Lucia will continue to spend a considerable amount of our resources on our children, and we hope that the international community will come to the aid of all those who recognize the future in children, providing for them the enabling environment for advancement, through opportunity, safety, love and peace

I thank you.