



*Permanent Mission of St. Kitts and Nevis to the United Nations*

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**Statement**

**By**

**His Excellency Honorable Dr. Timothy Harris**

**Minister of Foreign Affairs and Education**

**of the Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis**

**at the 59<sup>th</sup> Regular Session**

**of the United Nations General Assembly**

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Distinguished Secretary General, Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mr. President, on the occasion of your election to the presidency of the 59<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the United Nations General Assembly, I am pleased to welcome and congratulate you, and the Republic of Gabon, through you, for allowing us to share your experience and expertise. I must convey to Mr. Julian Hunte, Foreign Minister of St. Lucia my country's gratitude for his hard work and memorable contribution to this organization over the past year.

The Government of St. Kitts and Nevis reaffirms its strong support for and commitment to the praiseworthy, attainable Millennium Development Goals. Their stated objectives are fundamental and have long been incorporated into my country's national human development agenda.

For decades, before the Millennium Development Goals were agreed upon, St. Kitts and Nevis had instituted compulsory primary and secondary education, which may explain our achievement of a literacy rate of 97.8%. We, in CARICOM are very proud of our achievements in the field of education. We owe much of this success to our system of education and also to the University of the West Indies, whose academic credentials continue to amaze and evolve to meet the needs of our people. We invite fellow UN member states to explore this resource in the Caribbean so their citizens can pursue higher education in this great institution of learning and the most peaceful and pristine multicultural setting.

It is easy to become excited when I speak of our efforts in addressing the issue of women in development, but we will never let down our guard. In St. Kitts and Nevis, we have recognized and benefited from gender equality and the empowerment of women. It may be recalled that St. Kitts and Nevis was among the first in this hemisphere to create a Ministry of Women's Affairs.

Equally important to the Government of St. Kitts and Nevis is winning the war against poverty. We remain steadfast in our efforts to eliminate poverty, which is not simply a noble ideal. It is a practical, achievable objective; and by God, it is the right thing to do. In St. Kitts and Nevis, in the last seven years, we have endured social and economic dislocations in the wake of several catastrophic natural disasters, 9/11, and the downturns in the global economy. Nonetheless, with due care and attention to prudent fiscal and monetary management, we are investing in education, health and job creation. We continue to place people first by developing people-focused policies that generate growth and improve the lives of our citizens.

In the last seven years, the government of St. Kitts and Nevis has invested greatly in our national health system supported by the construction of a modern hospital, and professional development of health care workers. We believe this will improve the quality and access to healthcare for nationals and visitors alike. Our continued efforts to build a healthy nation, is consistent with our resolve to reduce child mortality and improve maternal health.

Additionally, our capital project investments have improved the existing distribution networks to satisfy demand and to better extend service coverage for potable water throughout the islands of St. Kitts and Nevis. Our road improvement and maintenance programs have resurfaced miles of road and improved drainage throughout the twin island Federation. The improvement of the tourism product has generated several new jobs consistent with my Government's people-focused agenda; while allowing us to depend less on an agriculture-based economy, which continue to suffer from government subsidies offered to farmers in large countries, and which make it more difficult for small economies like mine to compete. Our capacity to compete is further undermined by the recent unilateral decision of the EU to reduce the price of raw sugar by more than 30 percent.

Despite these challenges Mr. President, we continue to press on mindful of the need to preserve the environment. St. Kitts and Nevis are two beautiful islands faced with the geographic reality of being located in the hurricane corridor. We witness the cost of beach and coastal erosion resulting from rising sea level and hurricanes. Integrating environmentally sustainable policies into our development agenda has been a challenge. However, our determination to protect and preserve the islands' patrimony by adopting environmentally friendly programs is imperative.

At this juncture Mr. President I need to emphasize the current situation facing Small Island Developing States. All SIDS lack the economy of scale to overcome their vulnerabilities on their own. We are extremely vulnerable unless we form geographical partnerships as CARICOM has done. This however does not exempt us from the vulnerabilities that we face every day. Geographical partnership does allow for a quick response in the event of adversity. The vulnerability is ever present, but can be managed if the parties involved recognize it. My delegation therefore urges the international community to accept the concept of vulnerability, leading to a vulnerability index that can be appropriately applied to Small Island Developing States. Grenada's devastation within 3 hours of Hurricane Ivan dramatizes for us how a generation of developmental progress can be wiped out in a small vulnerable nation. There is a pressing need for a global development fund to assist SIDS in recovery following national disasters.

As emphasized in the Millennium Development Goals, St. Kitts and Nevis welcomes the opportunity to build partnerships for development. However, partnerships can only be developed when there is a willingness on all sides to partner. St. Kitts and Nevis remains a willing partner. We are extremely pleased that our programs and development agenda coincide with the Millennium Development Goals. We are encouraged, Mr. President, that foreign investors have found in St. Kitts and Nevis, a Government and people ready to work with them in a climate conducive to their corporate expectations and our national development objectives.

## **HIV/AIDS**

Mr. President, pragmatic and productive partnerships are the most effective vehicle available to the international community to tackle effectively the multitude of problems we face. We speak of important issues such as democracy, globalization, terrorism, poverty eradication, human development and the spread of infectious disease as if they are completely disconnected. The goal of human development, on any scale, is best achieved by recognizing the interconnectedness of our lives, economies and policies. This imposes an obligation to develop common strategies, partnerships and policy approaches that accept and address the intrinsic linkages among the problems facing nation states.

Mr. President, I propose that the Pan-Caribbean Partnership on HIV/AIDS is the first and only regional mechanism created to deal with the pandemic in a multinational way. Our regional cooperation has led to reductions in the cost of anti-retroviral from USD20.000 per person per year to USD200.00 per patient per year. We have also been successful in negotiating reduced prices for other important pharmaceutical drugs. This experience speaks to the value of partnership and cooperation. We believe that networks or collective mechanisms are the most effective means of problem solving. We praise the efforts of the Global Fund and the United Nations for their work in mobilizing additional resources to treat people living with HIV/AIDS and to fight the spread of the disease.

Notwithstanding, the recently concluded XV International AIDS Conference held in Bangkok, Thailand laid bare the serious challenges ahead in our battle against the spread of HIV/AIDS. It was also a stark reminder that policies and ideologies are still getting in the way of partnership and progress. I commend the Government of Thailand for hosting the conference, for its pledge to increase funding, for its success in tackling the spread of the disease, and for highlighting the theme of "Access for All".

The idea of fighting HIV/AIDS only through faith simplifies the human condition and suggests a misunderstanding of the nature and scope of the disease. My government insists that a pragmatic policy approach to fighting the spread of HIV/AIDS is as fundamental to good governance as is holding free and fair elections. Good governance means governments listening to and caring for their citizens. Good governance implies that leaders must lead with moral courage, take bold and, sometimes, controversial steps in the public interests.

## **GOOD GOVERNANCE**

Mr. President, good governance means placing the United Nations at the center of our international interaction, in accordance with and in full respect for the Charter. Good governance requires respect for every country's right to choose its own course consistent with its own laws and the will of its people. Good governance is not simply about whether we ostracize a country if its policies run counter to our national agenda. It should be about creating better understanding, cooperation, partnership, and building bridges of friendship. Good governance suggests to us in St. Kitts and Nevis that

governments abide by and commit to internationally recognized standards and principles, and do not discard them when it becomes expedient. Good governance entails holding everyone to the same standard and not raising the bar for some countries and lowering it for others.

Good governance should propel us to recognize the fact that nearly 23 million people in the Republic of China on Taiwan are essentially in a diplomatic black-hole alienated from our international discourse. Good governance requires of all peace-loving nations to urge both sides of the Taiwan Straits not only to commit to, but also to engage in constructive dialogue and preventive diplomacy. Good governance behooves us to support the hard work of the leaders and people of the Republic of China on Taiwan to comply with and work within the framework of international law. Good governance says to us in St. Kitts and Nevis that a people committed to the rule of law, democracy, and willing to invest in human development at home and abroad, should never be excluded from the fraternity of nations.

Such a situation is incongruous with core principles such as representative democracy, human rights protection, and the freedom of expression to which most of our member states subscribe. We cannot overlook the reality that the people of the Republic of China on Taiwan voluntarily abandoned marshal law decades ago and have committed themselves to democracy, free and fair election, and to invest in human development and the protection of human rights. Good governance means acknowledging the very positive strides made by the Republic of China on Taiwan and working with both parties to design an appropriate mechanism whereby the remarkable progress of the Chinese people is never squandered. Good governance of the United Nations, Mr. President, allow me to emphasize, is to embrace the Republic of China on Taiwan as a member of this organization in keeping with the principle of universality.

## **DEMOCRACY**

In addition, Mr. President, CARICOM takes great pride in our parliamentary system of government and the solid democracies from the centuries-old tradition. Our history teaches us that good governance and human development are indivisible. Where representative democracy, democratic institution building, freedom of expression, and the protection of human rights have not flourished human development has suffered. Where governments failed to respect the will of the people, human development faltered. Although CARICOM faces great limitations and challenges owing to the absence of natural and financial resources, we have managed to build credible democratic institutions, a reliable judicial system and lasting democracies where the transition from incumbent governments to opposition parties passes without incident. We are ready to share these experiences with the rest of the world.

In conclusion, Mr. President, for decades countries and academics have questioned the viability of small states. History though has witnessed not only our viability but also that we are a dependable beacon of hope for others – large and small. We live in an

interconnected world where national political decision in one corner of the world have devastating consequences thousands of miles away. We have already seen how acts of terrorism perpetrated against one state can have a worse effect economically on other states. We have experienced how diseases like HIV/AIDS, SARS, tuberculosis, malaria and others have become transnational and their emergence in one nation can spread and severely affect other nations.

We must therefore of necessity become our brother's keepers. We call on Member States to lend their support to the International Meeting to review the Barbados Program of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States scheduled to be held in Mauritius in January 2005.

Finally, I would like to repeat my call that partnership trumps nationalism and that multilateralism transcends unilateralism. I thank you all.