



TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

PERMANENT MISSION OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO TO THE UNITED NATIONS
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STATEMENT

by the

Honourable Winston Dookeran,

Minister of Foreign Affairs

of the

Republic of Trinidad and Tobago,

in the

General Debate of the Sixty-seventh

Session of the United Nations General Assembly

United Nations, New York,
October 01, 2012

Mr. President

The Honourable Kamla Persad-Bissessar, Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, on whose behalf I speak, extends her congratulations to His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremic on his election as President of the current session of the General Assembly.

The Honourable Prime Minister has also asked me to convey to the Secretary-General, His Excellency, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Trinidad and Tobago's appreciation for his untiring efforts in working towards peace and security in today's world.

I am privileged to address this distinguished chamber at a time when the world is faced with turmoil and uncertainty.

Today, Mr. President the world is radically different from a year ago.

A redistribution of wealth and the very nature of global power are shifting. New dynamics are emerging as we witness the growing economies in Latin America, Asia, and Africa.

The global pattern of distribution of resources is being transformed by new discoveries and by changes in technological processes and in information.

The world map of financial flows has changed forcing us to look with more scrutiny on the economic forces surrounding us and the threat they pose to financial sustainability.

It is in this context, Mr. President that Trinidad and Tobago endorses your statement, and I quote:

A growing number of states are determined to enhance their external engagement, aspiring to play greater roles in their respective regions and beyond. As a result, power and influence in the international arena are becoming diffuse.

Mr. President

When Trinidad and Tobago mounted this podium fifty years ago for the first time, our Permanent Representative His Excellency, Sir Ellis Clarke, an illustrious legal scholar remarked:

"We recognize the responsibility which we have assumed with membership of this Organization. That responsibility we can neither shirk nor delegate".

Today, I stand in reconfirmation of that responsibility.

In these decades of engagement, we were always anchored by the three main pillars on which the United Nations was founded, namely; peace and security, human rights and development.

At the core of our commitment has been the rule of law both within and beyond our borders, which is the basis of the theme that you have set for this year's debate in the following terms:

"Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means", which reaffirms a core principle enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. President

Too often we have witnessed the severity of the consequences when States act unilaterally to solve disputes through the illegal use of force.

Trinidad and Tobago calls on all nation states to ratify the amendments to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court on the crime of aggression. We expect to ratify these amendments by the next Assembly of States Parties.

The entry into force of these amendments will fill a crucial gap by making it possible to bring to justice those criminally responsible for the commission of the crime of aggression.

In the light of recent troubling developments, Trinidad and Tobago is compelled to reaffirm the provisions of the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations.

The Convention requires States to protect the premises of Diplomatic Missions and to ensure the safety of diplomatic personnel.

These sacred principles must be upheld even in times of armed conflict and armed violence.

Mr. President

The United Nations is the principal vehicle to facilitate the settlement of disputes or situations among States by peaceful means.

The architecture is in place to achieve this objective. There is need, however, to strengthen it. To achieve this noble goal the political commitment of Member States, whether big or small, developed or developing is absolutely necessary.

Member States must move with haste to restructure the Security Council.

For Trinidad and Tobago the status quo is unacceptable.

The Council must be reformed to represent the current geopolitical realities of the 21st century.

The legitimacy of this body can only be reaffirmed if the new dynamics of global power are reflected in its composition and operation.

It is a matter of grave concern to Trinidad and Tobago that the Security Council has not been able to effectively address the situation in Syria.

In this regard, we appeal to the Council to fully support the work of Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi - the Joint Special Representative for Syria of the United Nations and the League of Arab States.

The Council must uphold its sacred mandate under the Charter and ensure that all sides involved in that conflict are made to account for their actions, which have caused tremendous human suffering and continue to threaten international peace and security.

At the same time, we also call for more principled leadership by the Permanent Members of the Council to bring an end to the Israeli/ Palestinian conflict.

Despite the passage of numerous resolutions by the General Assembly and the Council, and several peace initiatives including that of the League of Arab States, we continue to witness, almost on a daily basis, wanton violence and the tremendous loss of life resulting in further escalation of tensions.

A resolution of the conflict remains elusive and is a catalyst for regional insecurity and instability.

This makes even more urgent the need to find a formula for enduring peace.

The United Nations must commit all available resources to mediating a two state agreement to begin to resolve the Israeli Palestinian situation, in full accordance with relevant resolutions reaffirming borders existing before 1967.

Mr. President

I will now address other issues relating to the global development agenda.

Mr. President,

The completion of Cuba's re-integration, as a full and equal partner, into the international system is an issue close to the Caribbean.

Over the years, this policy has been given practical content through the establishment of a wide ranging dialogue, and in specific cooperation arrangements in a variety of

sectors of developmental interest to the Caribbean, as part of the Caribbean convergence initiative.

In the view of Trinidad and Tobago the imperatives of that initiative impels us to regard the economic blockade against Cuba as an anachronism. We therefore call, yet again, for its removal.

We are only three years away from the deadline set by world leaders for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

While Trinidad and Tobago would have preferred a more equitable geographical representation on the Secretary-General's Panel on the acceleration of efforts to achieve targets set by the MDGs, we however, welcome its establishment.

We also call for fresh and bold changes and a paradigm shift in thinking in the design of the post 2015 development agenda.

Mr. President

We must safeguard the environment for future generations and in this regard move decisively to fully implement our obligations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Kyoto Protocol.

This would guarantee the survival of those of us most vulnerable to climate change, climate variability and sea level rise.

Every moment of delay is a step closer to our own demise.

Mr. President

The health and well-being of our people are central to development. The prevalence of Non-communicable Diseases (NCDs), in particular, poses a serious threat to Caribbean development. Trinidad and Tobago laments the lack of action on the Political Declaration adopted one year ago on the prevention and control of these diseases.

We cannot risk further inaction on this matter. The adverse consequences are significant. We therefore urge that this matter be given high priority on the international development agenda.

Mr. President

The stability of many regions is being undermined by the illicit trade in conventional weapons which has fuelled armed conflict and armed violence.

Trinidad and Tobago is encouraged by the support of many countries for the conclusion of a robust and legally binding Arms Trade Treaty.

However, we deeply regret the failure of the UN Diplomatic Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty, despite the support of an overwhelming majority. This is a reflection of the refusal of a few States to agree to an instrument which would prevent the diversion of arms to the illegal market.

Illegal weapons, including small arms and light weapons, in the hands of terrorists, drug dealers, gang leaders and other actors involved in transnational organized crimes, is an affront to efforts to resolve disputes by peaceful means.

In the Caribbean and I daresay elsewhere, the high incidence of gun-related crimes is intolerable.

We join with our CARICOM partners and others in the call for the resumption of negotiations for the Arms Trade Treaty by the first quarter of 2013.

Mr. President

We also recognize the important role of women as agents of change - not mere victims - in all initiatives related to the resolution of disputes and conflicts.

For this reason, Trinidad and Tobago was privileged to host a High-Level discussion with other Member States, representatives of the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs, as well as the NGO Community in the margins of the General Assembly last week on the topic: *Women, disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control*.

The highlight of the discussion was the signing of a Joint Statement by the Government Representatives to promote the equitable representation of women in all decision-making on these matters.

Trinidad and Tobago requests all Member States to support this resolution when it comes before the General Assembly in this session.

Mr. President

A majority of States settle disputes by peaceful means.

We take this opportunity to applaud the Special Agreement signed by the Governments of Belize and Guatemala to submit to the International Court of Justice for adjudication of their long-standing border dispute.

In the case of Trinidad and Tobago, we have delimited our maritime boundaries through bilateral negotiations and arbitration in keeping with the provisions of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

This conduct has not only promoted good neighborliness among States in the region, but has also provided an environment conducive to the exploration and exploitation of living and non-living marine resources so vital to the social and economic development of our people.

Mr. President

In this increasingly multi-polar world where interconnectivity is crucial, Small States are faced with mounting challenges to find a space and a place in the new world order.

Trinidad and Tobago has promoted at every forum the need for constructive dialogue between Small States, the G20, the BRICS and the international financial institutions.

Trinidad and Tobago recognizes that this calls for a new diplomacy and we therefore join with the Most Honourable Mrs. Portia Simpson-Miller, Prime Minister of Jamaica in calling on the major international lending agencies to recognize the special circumstances of middle-income countries and not push them to the margins of the development agenda.

We must advance the global economic governance agenda and to this end, small and middle-income nations must not be excluded from development cooperation and financing on the singular basis of per capita income.

Mr. President

Trinidad and Tobago looks forward to the next fifty years of membership of the United Nations with renewed optimism.

In spite of the hurdles of the past, today, we are witnessing a new vitality in the United Nations and we reiterate our advocacy for a new dialogue and a new diplomacy.

The international community is once again embracing multilateralism with higher expectations.

The continued development of new rules and new norms in human rights; trade and development; protection of the environment; and peace and security gives hope that the human tragedies which bedeviled the twentieth century can be avoided.

A new leadership with a global mindset must engage the various communities of interests to find more durable solutions in a volatile global environment.

This new international leadership must find the right mix of power, politics and economics to achieve the necessary performance level for sustainable regional and global economic growth and ultimately development benefitting the citizens of all nations.

Trinidad and Tobago will engage regional, hemispheric and global partners to assist the United Nations in making the world a safer and better place for all humanity.

But let me conclude Mr. President by reminding us all that we do not have the luxury of time. The eyes of the world are upon us.

Our actions today must allow tomorrow's generations to experience a better and more secure future.

I thank you.