



THE HON. WINSTON BALDWIN SPENCER
Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda

ADDRESS

**67th SESSION OF THE UN
GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

September 27th, 2012

Please check against delivery.

His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremic’:

I wish, at the outset, to extend heartiest congratulations and assurances of my cooperation and highest esteem to you, on your election to the presidency of the Sixty-Seventh Session of the General Assembly.

Antigua and Barbuda looks forward to your leadership and guidance throughout this session.

Congratulations also to your predecessor Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz al-Nasser on a job well done and for his continued service to the international community.

Mr. President,

The theme for the 67th session of the General Assembly, “Bringing about adjustments or settlements of international disputes or situations by peaceful means,” is judicious, for it accurately summarizes how we as nations need to act in these precarious times of insecurity and uncertainty.

These times and circumstances call for a heightened sense of urgency and a stronger will among all nations to work with and through the United Nations in embracing multilateralism in its truest form.

The Sixty-Seventh Session of the General Assembly is taking place against an environment of continued challenges to international peace and security; international democracy is being tested; there are unbearable poverty throughout the world; the sluggish recovery of the world’s economy provides little hope; and disasters induced by climate change are becoming more rampant.

Mr. President

Secretary-General

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

As we look around our global community, we ask ourselves what can we do to solve the many problems we face, how can we find and maintain the peace that we so desire.

Maybe if we ask ourselves not as individuals but as nations what is peace, then perhaps we can collectively resolve to find the answer to peace.

For Antigua and Barbuda: Peace means respect for human rights and the differences of others and the protection of women, children and the elderly. Peace is devoid of greed that ends in unparalleled wealth for a few and nauseating poverty for many. Peace means global health awareness, protection and accessibility for all. Peace means democracies with active global citizens by nonviolent change. Peace means eliminating nuclear weapons and controlling small arms.

Peace is deficient of violence and the acceptance of differences in race, gender and religion. Peace is a position to value the limits of nature's resources and the absence of ignorance and shortsightedness that selfishly plunders earth's plenty. Peace is the understanding that climate change is real and that sustainability should be our priority. Peace means fair trade and equality of equity in globalization.

Peace is the elimination of corruption in government. Peace is the understanding and the recognition that the world's problems can only be solved by the

inclusion of all countries; peace therefore becomes a wider and equal representation in the Security Council rather than a selected few.

Mr. President,

In 2011, we celebrated the International Year for Peoples of African Descent. That year has gone and so to has gone from the international agenda the issue of reparations for slavery, which is central to fighting racism and racial discrimination and nurturing a culture of peace among nations.

The legacy of racial violence, segregation and slavery against peoples of African descent have severely impaired our advancement as nations, communities and individuals across the political, social and most importantly, the economical spectra.

In the words of Kwame Kkrumah, “We can no longer afford the luxury of delay.” The time has come for us to revisit the issue of reparations for slavery and place it at the top of the international agenda.

Mr. President, over 200 million persons in the Americas depend on us. That is why I am reiterating a call I made in these hallowed halls in 2011 for former slave states to begin the reconciliation process by issuing formal apologies for the crimes committed by the nations or their citizens over the four hundred years of the African slave trade.

And while nations in the developing world continue to grapple with the effects of a world economic crisis, not created by their own doing, I call on former slave states to back up their apologies with new commitments to the economic development of these nations that have suffered from this human tragedy.

Mr. President,

Transnational crime is threatening the very existence of peace in Antigua and Barbuda. Our size, lack of human and financial resources makes it difficult for us, as a small island nation to address this impediment in an effective manner.

The crime and violence fueled by the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons is jeopardizing our major industries such as tourism; our healthcare systems are weighted down and families are being torn apart. Nevertheless, crime prevention and small arms control is a priority for my government.

It is important to note that Antigua and Barbuda nor our CARICOM brothers and sisters manufacture small arms and light weapons, yet one recent estimate indicates that there are 1.6 million illegal firearms in the region.

Additionally, Antigua and Barbuda is deeply saddened that despite significant efforts, strong will on the part of the majority of States and the fact that a compromise was potentially within reach, that there was no agreement on a text for the just concluded legally binding Arms Trade Treaty. Mr. President, be assured, that Antigua and Barbuda will not give up and we will continue to advocate for a legally binding treaty that will eliminate the threat that is crippling our region.

Mr. President,

Antigua and Barbuda is committed to the rule of law and the process it enables for direct political dialogue and cooperation among all states and international actors. The rule of law facilitates international peace and security, human rights and development for all.

Our shared responses to the threat of peace and security along with opportunities arising from various political, economic and social instabilities must be guided by the rule of law, as it is the basis for affable, coexistence and interdependence between States.

My Government upholds the ideals of the recently concluded High-level meeting on the rule of law and stands committed to uphold this most important principle.

The Caribbean has been known as a zone of peace. We value our ability to live and work together despite our religious and political beliefs and our ethnic backgrounds. Antigua and Barbuda therefore condemns the brutal killing of the US Ambassador to Libya and the destruction of the US embassy in Libya.

We condemn any acts of violence or killings disguised in the name of defending religious belief. If we are to build an environment of peace around the world, we must show tolerance for all peoples and beliefs.

Mr. President,

The dangers posed by non-state actors acquiring weapons of mass destruction are real, and should be seen by all countries, large and small as the single most destructive element to international peace and security. Antigua and Barbuda is particularly concerned by the lack of progress in the area of disarmament and

non-proliferation. There should be no compromise on this issue; Antigua and Barbuda remains resolute in our continued call for a nuclear weapon free world.

Mr. President,

The just concluded Rio+20 Summit on sustainable development provided an international platform to address the social, economic and environmental challenges affecting the international community. These challenges are direct threats to humanity and often times jeopardize peace and security for all.

“ As the future we want” Antigua and Barbuda saw the Rio+20 Summit as securing comprehensive and inclusive sustainability for small island nations whose survival are contingent on an outcome of commitments, and actions from the Summit.

Mr. President,

At the recently concluded Summit of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), my country joined with other small island states in sending the strongest message to the international community on the need for bold and ambitious actions. We cannot wait for our lands to disappear before we act. We must act now to respond to the climate crisis, and ensure that not a single country is sacrificed, no matter how small.

The threat is real, our sea-levels are rising, there is coral bleaching beyond the depths of our shores, and hurricanes are becoming more recurrent and severe.

The UNFCCC needs to take concrete steps in order to protect Small Island Developing States and other exposed countries from the threats of climate change.

The responsibility to mitigate climate change should be a collective consciousness for both developing and developed countries; however, developed countries should accept their responsibilities as the leading contributor in emitting extremely high levels of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere which are now threatening the welfare of the present and future generations.

It is my government's hope that the selfish act of inaction will dissipate in Doha and that a positive outcome in climate change negotiations will usher-in new hopes for humanity and compassion for our planet.

Mr. President, Antigua and Barbuda is doing its part in protecting mother earth. My government has embarked on a renewable energy mandate.

We are now shifting our focus on harvesting water and wind in supplying our energy needs. We are protecting our ecosystem with strong legislations; and we are replanting mangroves and protecting areas that are sensitive to pollutants.

Climate Change and sustainability are high on my government's development and investment policies; and my government is ensuring that new and refurbished private or commercial investments are in line with our green approach to our society.

My government also joins with member states of the Alliance of Small Island States in calling on the UN General Assembly to designate 2014 as the International Year of Small Island Developing States to raise awareness of the special situation of members and mobilize international support for our sustainable development.

Mr. President,

Over the past year, the Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) has made important progress in its support to the Haitian people's efforts to consolidate democracy, stability and the rule of law and move forward on the path to social and economic development.

In spite of progress made in, the situation in Haiti remains fragile as the country strives to overcome its daunting political, social, and economic challenges. I therefore stress the need for adequate funding and continued implementation of the Mission in Haiti.

I would like to reiterate my Government's strong support for the Mission in Haiti and to stress that peace will only be achieved if we simultaneously address issues of security, national reconciliation, and development.

I also call on those nations which pledged assistance to Haiti, to honour their commitments. Those pledges are needed urgently now that the rebuilding phase is progressing under a new administration.

Mr. President,

It has been nearly 5 years since we started to see a sharp downturn in the world's economy. Unfortunately, Antigua and Barbuda is among small and developing states that have yet to see significant improvements. While we have tried several attempts to curtail the haemorrhaging of our fragile economies, it must be said that we need greater cooperation, flexibility and inclusion from our developed partners.

GDP can no longer be the criterion used when accessing concessionary financing and other international financial reliefs; instead, mechanisms should be put in place that take into consideration a host of other elements including fragility of economies.

Mr. President, we are still in a crisis, a crisis of confidence in global governance and the institutional capacity for managing the international financial systems, international trade and international development policies.

We are also living in the era of globalization where cooperative collectives and not ambitious and selfish empires must be the order of the day in international financial governance; a privilege few should never be allowed to make financial decisions that impact the socio-economic livelihood of millions without regard for the excluded majority.

Economic prosperity should be shared equally among countries and within countries. The exclusive clubs of the G-8 and G20 cannot repair the fragmented international financial system without due consideration of the majority of nations left on the outside with much to offer.

Mr. President, My government calls on the developed and OECD countries to guarantee that their response approach to international tax matters involves improved international cooperation on tax issues through comprehensive and supportive frameworks that ensure the involvement and equal treatment of small jurisdictions like Antigua and Barbuda without the nuances of inappropriate branding as tax havens.

Mr. President, Antigua and Barbuda has been proactive in its approach to diversifying our economy; we entered into the international gaming sector abiding by all prescribed international standards. Unfortunately, our friend and developed partner, the United States of America, was of the view that our gaming sector contravened its domestic laws.

Antigua and Barbuda found it appropriate to seek international redress on the matter through the dispute mechanism of the WTO. We were triumphant, and the United States was ordered to compensate Antigua and Barbuda for its losses. Yet, years after, Antigua and Barbuda is still engaging in negotiations with the United States.

I therefore call on the government of the United States to work with us to quickly resolve this matter and for us to arrive at a settlement that is fair and just.

I also call on the United States to work cooperatively with Antigua and Barbuda and other remote gaming jurisdictions to forge an enlightened, reasonable and reasoned way of addressing the regulation and licencing of remote gaming services.

Mr. President,

While we are on the matter of trade disputes, it has been decades that the United States has instituted its blockade on Cuba. Time and time again the international community through the general assembly has long called on the United States to lift this trade barrier on Cuba, however it continues unabated.

Since its inception, the blockade has inflicted untold economic damage to the Cuban people, caused shortages and needless suffering to the Cuban population, limited and restrained the development of the country and seriously damaged the Cuban economy. Through this all, the Cuban people have managed to preserve their sovereignty, independence and right to self-determination.

As a country committed to the norms of the multilateral trading system, to the freedom of trade and navigation, and one that rejects the extraterritorial application of another country's national law, we call on the United States to immediately and unconditionally lift its economic blockade against the people of Cuba.

It is time to turn a new page of peace, cooperation and understanding, a time for global healing and international community building. This continued blockade further destroys the very fabric of hope that we have as a community of nations in resolving earth's issues.

Mr. President,

The world is changing. Economies, policies and countries are becoming more intertwined than ever before. Antigua and Barbuda sees these relationships of integration as having positive steps in achieving a world that is less dominated by a few but rather a unification of leadership in hopes of combating most of the world's shortcomings.

The smaller developing countries in the Caribbean, the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States are poised to make great strides in our integration agenda. The ratification of the OECS Economic Union is a major step in that direction. We have a shared stable currency, with a monetary council that has been instrumental in preventing further deterioration of our economies.

There have been renewed commitments by all CARICOM countries to work tirelessly in the realization of the full potential of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy. Antigua and Barbuda has joined ALBA, an institution that is built on principles of solidarity, complementarity and cooperation.

The Community of Latin America and Caribbean States (C-LAC) - a new integration arm within our region, the geographical position of our countries, our shared cultures and values and our desires as developing partners for a more just global community that is built on fairness and peace, gives my government hope that all is not lost in multilateralism.

Mr. President

Antigua and Barbuda faces many challenges in the prevention, care and treatment of Non Communicable Diseases or NCDs. Heart disease, diabetes, cancer, cardiovascular disease and chronic respiratory diseases continue to be the

leading causes of death in Antigua and Barbuda with cancer and heart disease being the top two leading causes.

The cost burden, loss of production, and disabilities as a result of chronic diseases continue to weigh heavy on our health care system since treatment for these diseases and their complications such as dialysis, chemotherapy, and drug therapy continue to be offered free of cost to patients.

The fight against NCDs therefore remains high on Antigua and Barbuda's health agenda.

Following our participation in the United Nations High Level Meeting last year, the government of Antigua and Barbuda approved the establishment of a multi-sectoral NCD Commission to provide leadership in this critical area, drafted legislation for tobacco control, engaged civil society and NGOs in drafting an NCD Policy and Action Plan and has supported plans for the development of a comprehensive Cancer Treatment Center in Antigua and Barbuda. The Ministries of Health and Agriculture continue to collaborate in the development of a Food Policy that will address some of the risk factors for NCDs.

The fight with HIV/AIDS in my region is also real - the figures are heartbreaking and the outlook is troubling. Despite some progress, much still needs to be done to achieve the 2015 goal of universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, support and care.

My government is in the process of updating work place code of conduct to prevent discrimination in the workplace of persons living with HIV/AIDS. We

will not tolerate injustice, intolerance and violence of any kind against persons living with HIV / AIDS.

Mr. President;

As Small Island Developing states, many would hold the belief that countries like Antigua and Barbuda are only concerned with development, but I stand here today with grave concern that the disregard for world peace and security threatens the very existence of humanity and would push the international community into further chaos and destruction.

We cannot ignore from our tiny peaceful shores, the images glared across our TV screens of unrest, protest, and demonstration of rights from different corners of the world. The images are daunting, the voices of change are deafening and the use of force or threat of use of force to suppress the voices of democracy is intolerable.

The United Nations has to be unified in a response to act in a peaceful manner while protecting the rights of populations near and far.

Mr. President

The situation in Syria is disheartening; children, women and the elderly must be protected. I call on both sides to exercise restraint and allow humanitarian relief supplies to enter Syria. I also call on all nations to cease the supply of arms to both sides in the conflict. As leaders, our priority must be to urge all parties in

Syria to implement a cease-fire and stop the violence immediately and completely.

Every effort must be made to implement Annan's six-point proposal and relevant UN Security Council resolutions. The United Nations and the Arab League must lead in this process. Any threats of war should be diminished; and negotiation and mediation should be the order of the day.

If not addressed, the Syrian crisis presents a serious threat to international peace and security. Antigua and Barbuda will continue to give our support to a just, peaceful and appropriate settlement of the Syrian crisis at an early date.

Mr. President;

These are undeniably perilous times, and when an event occurs in a distant part of the globe that can severely impinge on Antigua and Barbuda domestically, to completely ignore the need for tolerance through peaceful means, we will not only produce indignation but also the perilous practice of intolerance for peace.

The multiple and interconnectedness of the many global threats and challenges we face will test the abilities of this august assembly of nations. Is the United Nations up to the task?

I am confident, that sharing our collective wisdom, and drawing from this source, UNGA 67 will translate into meaningful and enduring benefit and peace for the peoples of the world. I am equally confident that our deliberations will lead to solutions that will ensure the protection of all our peoples.

I therefore call on all of us as world leaders to rise to the challenges and move with haste to bring peace to the many citizens of this world.

As leaders and caretakers of humanity, our response to these challenges will be recorded in the books of history based on our ability to act with constraint, efficiency, and fairness in order to achieve stability through peaceful means.

I thank you.