



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

Statement

By

His Excellency Honorable Dr. Denzil Douglas

Prime Minister

of the Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis

at the High-level Plenary Meeting

of the United Nations General Assembly

September 15, 2005

UN Headquarters, New York

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Prime Minister of Saint Kitts and Nevis  
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Distinguished Heads of State and Government, Honorable Ministers  
and members of Parliament Excellencies; other distinguished guests;  
ladies and gentlemen:

Five years ago, world leaders boldly agreed a blueprint to eradicate poverty; achieve universal primary education; promote gender equality and empower women; reduce child mortality and Improve maternal health; combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and related diseases; ensure environmental sustainability; and develop a global partnership for development. These goals remain fundamental to our ability to improve the human condition and transform our societies. Although it may indeed be necessary to rationalize modalities for arriving at these goals; their achievement should not be negotiable. Social justice and the obligations of development are a sine qua non of any progressive civilization.

Five years on, we must ask ourselves, what if anything can be held up as results of our stewardship. Unfortunately, I still hear the usual excuses; but in addition, I hear a chorus of discontent with the United Nations drowning the mournful voices of the impoverished, the marginalized, and the diseased and dying who sadly seem not to be getting the chance they deserve. I hear old excuses repackaged in new forms but whose ultimate objective is identical with the old intention of unraveling the consensus which previously stimulated action towards the Millennium Development Goals.

It is providential that we are reviewing the Millennium Development Goals, examining the question of reform of the United Nations and commemorating the anniversary of its sixtieth year all at the same time. I share the call for strategic reforms of the United Nations; which my government has been making for the last decade. We have repeatedly asked for the United Nations to have an enhanced role in development and to be more responsive to and cognizant of the needs of the many and not merely to become an instrument of the few.

The United Nations, six decades hence, must change; but we must inspire change for the better. Change must flow from the changing realities of our times. But to urge change simply to alter the current system so that it works better for only a few will not strengthen the role and credibility of the United Nations but ultimately weaken the organization. We must address change in the make-up of the Security Council and change the business-as-usual in the General Assembly, the Human Rights Commission and the Economic and Social Council. We should not tolerate attempts to use the excuse of failures in the institutional structures of the Organization to challenge or discredit areas where progress is being made. The United Nations must become responsive to its wider membership and mean something to their citizens.

Inasmuch as small countries like Saint Kitts and Nevis need to see progress on the Millennium Development Goals and reform of the United Nations, my government has been making incremental steps at home. In Saint Kitts and Nevis, primary and secondary education is compulsory and free. We continue to provide school meals, uniforms, textbooks and access to information technology to help those less fortunate so that they are not left behind. For my government, the right to development is as

much a moral and human issue as it is a political duty for me as a political leader.

On the question of HIV/AIDS, Saint Kitts and Nevis along with its sister countries of the CARICOM Community has formed the Pan Caribbean Partnership (PANCAP), a mechanism through which the sub-region has successfully developed and implemented a regional strategy to fight HIV/AIDS, with its attenuated stigmatization and discrimination practices, provide treatment and care, and negotiate reduced cost of medicine to treat those persons who labor under this affliction. The PANCAP has been mentioned by the United Nations as a best practice model.

In this regard, we welcome the recent commitment of the Republic of China on Taiwan as a contributor to the Pan Caribbean Partnership (PANCAP), as part of the clear demonstration of support of the Caribbean's fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic, despite its omission from the World Health Assembly (WHA) and this august body of nations. Our Ministry of Gender and Social Development continues to work to protect the rights of the Youths, the Aged/Senior Citizens and to empower women so that their valuable Inputs and expertise inform the process of governance development

This year, Mr. President, St. Kitts and Nevis which has depended on sugar production for its foreign exchange and economic survival took the difficult but necessary steps towards abandoning sugar cane production. This decision had become necessary despite the argument that globalization and free market are supposed to spread prosperity far and wide; and the reality that countries with larger labor forces, greater factors of productions, great wealth still rationalize granting subsidies to their

farmers and impose barriers that either limit or deny fair access to their markets. The tremendous social, psychological and economic costs of this decision are only now being borne out in Saint Kitts and Nevis.

We would like to see greater debt relief for heavily indebted countries, and have been encouraged by the Declaration of the G8 Summit of July earlier this year. The interest of poor nations would also be better served if developed countries adopt fairer trade policies which are informed by capacity restraints and which accord special and differential treatment to weak smaller economies.

In addition to this insidious creeping economic problem, the almost daily escalation of oil prices threatens to further undermine the fragile economic base of countries such as mine. Yes, we have taken steps to diversify our economy and have sought to retrain sectors of the population to meet the challenges of the changing world; but poor countries seem to have to play by a different set of the rules. Nevertheless, the Government and people of Saint Kitts and Nevis are making meaningful strides towards achieving some of the Millennium Goals.

However, in some areas, we still need help. In other areas the policies of some countries unwittingly undermine our efforts to achieve these Goals. At the heart of the debate for reforming the United Nations is the underlying notion that the United Nations should have greater power to intervene in failed states. Yet there is no corresponding efforts to empower the United Nations to assist states that are undergoing dramatic economic dislocations, social inequities and political unease to ensure that they do not become a self-fulfilling prophedy-failed'states.

Mr. President, we can have another five years of hollow debates; we can make empty promises or excuses as to why no action is being taken in many critical areas. We can also resolve to move forward by recommitting to do what is right and in the best interest of the collective agenda of this organization. I know on which side of history my country, St. Kitts and Nevis, will stand.

I thank you all; may God bless you.