



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

Statement

By

His Excellency Honorable Dr. Denzil L. Douglas

Prime Minister

of the Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis

at the 60th Regular Session

of the United Nations General Assembly

September 22, 2005

UN Headquarters, New York

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**Statement by His Excellency the Honorable Dr. Denzil L. Douglas
Prime Minister of Saint Kitts and Nevis
Sixtieth Regular Session of the United Nations General Assembly
New York September 22, 2005**

Distinguished Heads, Honorable Foreign Ministers, other Ministers, Secretary General, Mr. President, Excellencies, Special guests, Ladies and gentlemen:

My Government supports the report of the Secretary-General which reaffirms development, peace, security and human rights as fundamental to the well-being of any modern state. The Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis steadfastly contends that there is an inherent link between poverty reduction, the promotion of human rights, economic development, security and good governance.

Regrettably, Mr. President, the tendency has been to separate them, in favor of what some call political imperatives. I daresay policies do not and cannot exist in a vacuum. Politics is about people and therefore national, regional or even international organizational policies must be about people. The evidence is stark.

The political landscape reveals clear indications of the interconnectedness of the phenomena of poverty eradication, security, economic development and governance. The task of governance is becoming increasingly difficult in the face of growing unemployment, deepening poverty, escalating energy prices and mounting cost of living. As a consequence, we have witnessed social dislocations and civil disquiet. The fruits of Globalization still do not grow among the world's poorest who have become further marginalized and blame their governments; which despite the best efforts are often relegated to the margins of political discourse and economic activities.

Some citizens have become more vocal and open in their distrust of governments' policies which fail to deliver the promises of democracy and Globalization, or to reduce poverty and unemployment, and to improve their

standard of living. The economic and political rift between rich and poor nations is steadily becoming a deeper divide as mistrust continues to characterize relations between the developed and developing countries.

Understandably, small countries despite limiting and diminishing resources are expected to participate equally in the fight against the social scourges that confront us. But this reduces dramatically our ability to make new and necessary investments in socio-economic development. It is within this context that we urge member nations to support substantively the Millennium Challenge Goals; to partner with us, recognizing our vulnerabilities to natural disasters and other external economic factors; the need for preferred and differential treatment in trade, and access to markets in developed countries. We urge developed countries to apply policies that do not undermine our efforts or reverse the gains we have made. We call for equity and "to live and let live."

Mr. President, despite overwhelming odds, however, my government stands ready to do its share. At the base of our efforts and policies is the fundamental importance of strengthening the rights of the child. We believe that promoting the rights of the child goes to the heart of full and effective protection of human rights. We further believe that by making sure every child in Saint Kitts and Nevis has access to primary and secondary education, to potable water, and to health care, we are creating healthier, better adjusted and productive adults whose rights would have been nourished and enshrined in the policy orientation and development agenda of our country.

It is generally accepted that the right to development is also a fundamental right, for which national governments have a primary responsibility. Long before the Millennium Development Goals were formally elaborated and adopted by the community of nations, this fundamental right was emphatically understood by the Government of St. Kitts and Nevis. As a point of reference, in this year's United Nations Human Development Report, St. Kitts and Nevis has been ranked 49 out of 177 countries on the United Nations Human Development Index – the second highest ranking in the Caribbean region and indeed among the highest in the Latin America and Caribbean region. The report reflects the reality in St. Kitts and

Nevis where there is an adult literacy rate of 97.8 per cent, a life expectancy rate of 70 years (which needs upward revision), and a combined primary, secondary and tertiary school enrolment ratio of 89 per cent.

The report confirms 98 per cent access to safe water and sanitation. In the field of health, it notes 99 per cent rate of immunization of infants against tuberculosis and measles; and underscores our commitment to gender equality starting with current parity in enrolment levels among girls and boys in school at both the primary and secondary levels.

The establishment by the Caribbean Community of the Pan Caribbean Partnership (PANCAP) to combat HIV/AIDS has proven useful and pragmatic a vehicle for collective action and result. It has distinguished itself and been identified as a best practice model. The per capita income of approximately US\$8,000 places us squarely among upper middle-income countries. We thank the United Nations for recognizing our efforts, which are the results of policies engineered to ensure development of the individual despite obstacles facing small economies. They also reflect the commitment of my Government of ensuring the protection of the rights and role of our children in our country's future.

Mr. President, this however is only one side of the coin. The achievements to which I referred come at a cost. The last decade has been particularly difficult for Saint Kitts and Nevis. Our small island state continues to be especially vulnerable to natural disasters, external economic fluctuations, and policies biased against small economies. My country has experienced back-to-back hurricanes, landslides and flood, at a cost of more than half a billion dollars. We have been forced to allocate more and more money for recovery and away from development.

The experience throughout the Caribbean is similar; and in July this year, my sister CARICOM nation of Grenada again suffered serious devastation caused by Hurricane Emily on the back of last year's devastation brought by Ivan. The Maldives, another small island sister nation has made pleas for a delay in the

process set in motion for its graduation from the list of Least Developed Countries due to the Tsunami. We support the Maldives' request.

In addition to the cost of recovery, escalating high energy prices and the cost of food imports, we face the prohibitively high cost of implementing supplementary security measures since 9/11. To further compound this grave situation, the recent rulings of the World Trade Organization relative to trade preferences have dealt a significant blow to small economies in the Caribbean and threaten to unravel their economic base.

In the case of my country, after centuries of sugar production and sale to the European market, a cornerstone of economic support and social stability, we have been forced to close that industry which succumbed to continuous losses and escalating debts. St. Kitts and Nevis can no longer compete profitably in a world market characterized by engineered low prices for sugar and the unfair trading practices of some countries. This has severe implications for unemployment, social dislocations, psychological distress and dramatic loss of urgently needed foreign exchange earnings.

Mr. President, we have tried to prepare for such an eventuality through a process of economic diversification but support from the international community has not been forthcoming. The cost of borrowing, the removal of grant financing from the menus of International Financial Institutions, the recovery costs of catastrophic hurricanes annually, have become more onerous. Creative legal policy initiatives have been challenged and undermined by some developed countries. In an attempt to fulfil the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, my government has also pursued policies to stimulate and facilitate private-sector led growth by investing in physical infrastructure and human resource development. But we need international political and economic support.

Mr. President, the Secretary-General underscored the fact that threats to peace and security represent different things to different countries. If we intend to promote collective security, there must be an appreciation of, and sensitivity to, this diversity among countries. In the same way, we are called upon to aid in the

fight against terrorism, drug trafficking, transnational organized crimes and other scourges that threaten international peace and security in the more advanced countries; it is not unreasonable to expect reciprocity of support in fighting the almost intractable problems that confront small states. To address these urgent challenges, we call on the international community to support and contribute to the full, timely and effective implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the further implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States; which we consider an important mechanism for achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

My Government was heartened by the proposal of the Secretary General in his Report for the establishment of a Human Rights Council. We also support effective change in the United Nations; which also means the Security Council must evolve to reflect the current world reality. The United Nations must also play a more enhanced role in development and the concerns of Small Island Developing States must be given greater attention within this Organization. Small states can offer best practice models and creative ideas from which the international debate on development, peace, security and human rights could benefit. We encourage greater transparency in the deliberations of critical organs of the organization; and greater opportunities for small states to be represented in the decision-making processes of these organs.

Mr. President, the people of Taiwan continue to be excluded from the brotherhood of nations, which was created to represent the hopes and aspirations of all peoples. My Government reiterates its call for the people of the Republic of China, Taiwan, to be consulted, effectively represented and invited to participate in the critical debates on world peace, human security, development, and human rights. I believe that we would have failed to promote human rights effectively, if through political exclusion, generations of people are relegated to the margins of such important issues and the fora which facilitate their discussion.

In conclusion, Mr. President, I remain cautiously optimistic about the future. On one hand, governments have rededicated to the struggle to build a world free from want, free from fear, and with the freedom to live with dignity. In

addition, we are poised to reform the United Nations in the hope that it can play a more effective role in this ever-changing world. On the other hand, the tenor of last week's Millennium Summit suggests a strong possibility that some developed countries may yet renege on these commitments, which could further erode developing countries' efforts to eradicate extreme poverty, generate employment, promote human security and narrow the development gap between richer and poorer countries.

However, we still have an opportunity for enhanced global partnership; to turn commitments into action and to secure a future for our children; free from want of the basic necessities, free from fear of violence, with guarantees of protection of the right to live in dignity. Only then will we build and reinforce the foundation of democracy, enhance collective security and jumpstart a process where Globalisation becomes a vehicle for change among all of the world's peoples.

I thank you; and may God bless us all.