

COMMONWEALTH OF DOMINICA



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF DOMINICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS
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Statement by

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On the occasion of the
76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

*Theme: “Building resilience through hope – to recover from COVID-19,
rebuild sustainability, respond to the needs of the planet, respect the rights
of people, and revitalise the United Nations.”*

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Secretary-General

President of the 76th Session

Excellencies

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mr. President, on behalf of the Government and People of the Commonwealth of Dominica, I congratulate you on your election to the Presidency of the 76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly and wish you every success.

Mr. President, we are convening this 76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, at a time when our Planet Earth is at its warmest and each and every member state is grappling with the impact of the deadly COVID-19 pandemic.

Dominica's Experience:

Excellencies, the Commonwealth of Dominica recorded its first COVID-19 case on March 22, 2020, and for more than 12 months, even with limited resources, we managed to keep our number of active cases within double digits and without recording a single COVID-19 related death....because from the onset, our Government adopted comprehensive COVID-19 containment measures and protocols.

We have however in recent weeks seen a spike in cases, and have recorded our first COVID-19 deaths and we have had to redirect scarce resources to combat this surge, while increasing investment in primary health care services.

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, we consider ourselves fortunate and express gratitude for being a recipient of donations of vaccines from the Governments of Republic of India, the Peoples' Republic of China, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and through the COVAX facility.

We are fully aware, however, that there are still several countries with limited or no access to COVID-19 vaccines and we call on member states and the International Community by extension, to acknowledge the importance of -

Resolution 74/274; adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, which calls for the strengthening of supply chains that promote and ensure universal, fair, inclusive, transparent, equitable, efficient and timely access to medicines, vaccines and other health supplies in order to address the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dominica firmly supports the view that vaccines are a public good and that no one is safe until everyone is safe.

Excellencies, Science has proven that vaccines are an important way out of this pandemic, and a coordinated response to COVID-19 is not possible without an open and supportive multilateral system.

I wish to thank the World Health Organisation, the Pan-American Health Organisation, the Caribbean Public Health Agency and all our other bilateral partners for their continued support in our effort at preventing, detecting, and responding to this pandemic and we are particularly appreciative of the leadership of PAHO and its provision of vaccines, technical support, medical equipment and supplies under the COVAX Mechanism.

Mr. President, Dominica would like to place on record our deepest gratitude to the Government of India for allowing us to be among the first of developing countries to begin the vaccination of our citizens.

We also express our gratitude to the Government of Republic of Cuba for allowing its medical brigade to compliment the services of our health care workers who have been stretched to capacity and to the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for supplying PPEs and test kits as part of our response.

The Government of the Peoples' Republic of China continues to be a true friend to Dominica, by being one of the first countries to our aid, with the supply of masks, other Personal Protective Equipment, ventilators, testing and other diagnostic supplies and ventilators, especially during the early days of the pandemic, when these were in short supply.

Mr. President, to survive this pandemic and to better prepare for the future, priority must therefore be given to universal access to quality healthcare services to all citizens. This will require a greater role for the World Health Organization and its hemispheric counterparts such as the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO), Caribbean Public Health Agency (CAPHA).

For small developing states like Dominica, the COVID-19 pandemic threatens to reverse the gains that we have made in the socio-economic development of our people, by placing additional burdens on national budgets as our governments are forced to provide increased support to our citizens.

Excellencies, the closure of businesses, and the additional cost of operating businesses during the restrictions occasioned by the actions to contain the virus, is having an extremely debilitating impact on the private sector.

Our tourism industries have been dealt a devastating blow, as the impact has been most severe in the hotel, hospitality, and service sectors. We must therefore work collectively to end this deadly pandemic.

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates; living with the COVID-19 pandemic and preparing for future pandemics must now become essential components of sustainable development.

Developing countries like Dominica are at risk of not being able to meet our Sustainable Development Goals if this pandemic continues to severely impact our people and countries.

Thus, our international development partners, both bilateral and multilateral, must be responsive to our new realities and calls for more creative financial instruments that take into account these new realities.

Dominica is of the view that, this new dispensation must also reward countries for progressive policies directed at creating sustainable systems for production and consumption.

Universal access to quality healthcare must now be pursued more aggressively, whilst at the same time, access to quality and relevant education must continue, if small states are to build capacity and advance their national sustainable development agendas.

Climate Change

Mr. President, rising sea levels coupled with more frequent and extreme weather events, make the Caribbean one of the most vulnerable regions in the world.

Recent weather phenomena in the Commonwealth of Dominica suggest that the climate is indeed changing, with increases in temperature, changes in the seasons and erratic temperature variations.

Fellow Delegates, according to the World Bank study entitled: “*Turn Down the Heat*”, the number of severe hurricanes is projected to increase by 40 percent, with double the intensity, as warming rises by 2°C and up to 80 percent in case of a 4°C warming.

A single disaster event can affect an entire territory or economy and cause a disproportionately high loss of GDP as was the case with Hurricane Maria, which affected all the economic and social sectors in Dominica with an estimated impact of 226% of GDP.

Distinguished Delegates, Dominica continues to call on the major polluters to take more aggressive actions to reduce global warming, as our planet will not be able to sustain life as we know it, if they continue to pursue their unsustainable systems of production and consumption unabated.

Dominica is working on becoming the world’s first climate resilient nation and we are committed to doing more than just adapt to the impact of climate change but these major polluters **MUST** take up their responsibilities to support Small island developing nations like ours, to achieve these goals.

We would like to thank our International partners who have helped to create the Climate Resilient Execution Agency of Dominica (CREAD), to coordinate donor-funded climate resilient projects, as we mainstream resilience across sectors.

Mr. President, recently, the Government of Dominica approved the Comprehensive National Resilience Development Strategy and the development

of Dominica's Climate Resilience and Recovery Plan (CRRP), which further underscores Government's commitment towards disaster risk reduction, resilience building at all levels and the development of sound response and recovery mechanisms.

Dominica looks forward to the renewal of discussions at COP 26 in a few weeks time, where commitments made under the Paris agreement can be revisited and honoured, especially as it pertains to climate financing.

This is a matter of climate justice!

As Dominica and other SIDS are not responsible for the warming of our planet but we are disproportionately impacted by the effect of climate change.

Renewable Energy

Mr. President, one of the major contributors to climate change is the consumption of fossil fuel for the production of electricity and for transportation and the importation of fossil fuel, has over the years, had the greatest impact on the economic vulnerability of many Small Island Developing States.

The transition of the energy sector away from fossil fuel, therefore, is central to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, building resilience to economic and climate related events and ultimately, pursuing a sustainable development pathway.

Mr. President, the Commonwealth of Dominica continues to pursue the development of its geothermal resources as this will allow us to move away from the importation of fossil fuel for the generation of electricity within the next five years, while also reducing the cost of electricity to our people.

The development of geothermal energy also has the potential to sustain clean-mobility and to create a new industrial revolution powered by a cleaner and more affordable energy.

To date, our efforts to develop our country's geothermal potential have been supported by several partners: the UK, World Bank, SIDS DOCK, Caribbean Development Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, the European Commission, the Government of New Zealand, the Clinton Climate Initiative and the United Arab Emirates., and we would like to thank them all.

Mr. President, the plight of our brothers and sisters in the Republic of Haiti continues, much to the concern of Dominica and the rest of the Caribbean Community. Over the last decade, Haiti has struggled with rising poverty levels, sustained political instability and numerous disasters, resulting in extreme hardship the citizens of this sister Caribbean nation.

Haiti is currently in the top 10 countries experiencing a food crisis.

The United nations must therefore take leadership in coordinating targeted support to the Haitian Government for the benefit of its people.

Excellencies, our Caribbean region also continues to call for the discontinuation of the economic, financial and trade embargo on our brothers and sisters in the Republic of Cuba.

Notwithstanding this decades-old embargo, the Republic of Cuba continues to make a positive impact on our region, and the wider world and we renew our call to the Government of the United States to allow the people of Cuba to be fully integrated into the global trading system, to improve their lives and to allow the world to continue to benefit from their tremendous contributions especially in science and technology.

Mr. President,

Dominica is convinced that as a collective we have the ability to solve all of the challenges which confront us.

The extreme pace of human advancement in the 21st century has demonstrated that we have the capacity and ingenuity to combat climate change, and to develop means of production and consumption to sustain humanity, while at the same time protecting our planet.

We must all recommit to playing our part to save our planet and to improve the lives of citizens worldwide: Those who suffer from hunger and starvation, and others who continue to be marginalized will be pointless without peace and security.

The destruction brought about by wars within and between countries continues to displace millions of people from their homes creating unprecedented refugee crises.

Mr. President, Excellences, Distinguished delegates, the United Nations is a critical player in maintaining world peace and security and Dominica remains committed to collaborating with the United Nations and all its agencies, as well as Member States, to strengthen the Mission of this noble institution.

We commend the leadership of the Secretary General in this regard and we reaffirm our confidence in the UN system as the ultimate negotiating and deliberating body for addressing major challenges confronting the world.

Mr. President, history will record both our actions and inactions that can result in educating and saving our generation from this pandemic, and from global

warming and climate change, thus ensuring a safer planet for our children, and future generations.

I Thank You.