

National Statement  
Hon. Mia Amor Mottley S.C., M.P.,  
Prime Minister of Barbados  
United Nations General Assembly General Debate  
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Madam President,

Excellencies,

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

The twenty-first century has been marked by a series of crises for which the world was unprepared. A financial crisis that started in 2008 which then triggered fiscal crises across many of the world's countries.

And if that was not enough, a social crisis characterised by rising inequality with the consequences thereto - be it substance abuse, mental health challenges, homelessness or human trafficking.

And if that was not enough, a global pandemic lasting two to three years that took the lives of millions of people and for those surviving, restricted choice and movement for them.

All of this has been exacerbated by the spreading of fake news. This distorts reality and threatens the stability of our societies, creating a platform for hate to thrive and prejudice to rise.

But, deeper than all these crises is a bigger more insidious crisis that is undermining our domestic and global institutions that have promoted order, peace and prosperity: it is the crisis of TRUTH.

Excellencies, when we lose shared TRUTH, our countries and our global society loses its center of gravity.

At first, the damage may seem quiet. Words bend and facts drift in the service of political point-scoring.

But, slowly, over time, we descend into political tribalism. We develop alternative realities. And, we are unable to understand each other and communicate with each other because we lack a center.

Then, we grow suspicious of each other.

In the absence of truth, TRUST deteriorates.

You see it all around us. In global forums and on the block in communities in your own countries.

Trust between neighbours. Trust between the governed and the governing. Trust in our instructions. Trust in our social order. Trust in our health systems. Trust in our global rules governance structures.

It all seems to be falling apart.

When we lack truth and we lack trust, law becomes theater, news becomes spectacle and science becomes just another opinion.

As I have had cause to say in this Great Hall a few times, our world today worryingly resembles the world of 100 years ago. And this has become even more evident with the closing of our borders to both goods and people.

This has magnified the geopolitical tensions which had already taken root. Disturbingly war only entered the daily lexicon of the West not when thousands were dying on the continent of Africa or in Myanmar but when war became a reality in Ukraine. Nevertheless, we call for peace in Ukraine.

Only yesterday a leading British Newspaper reminded us that for 500 days 260,000 people virtually the population of my country people have been trapped in the Sudanese city of El Fasher. They reported while political progress stalls, those who attempt escape are killed and those who remain inside are starved. The world must not ignore the horror in Sudan and definitely not Gaza.

The genocidal destruction taking place in Gaza right now no attention. Yes there must be a release of the hostages taken on October 7th.

But we have now gone to a point where all of our human sensibilities are offended by the continuous and disproportionate attacks on the Palestinian people and the failure to allow access by the international community to the survivors for the provision of humanitarian aid.

The survivors are entitled to use the words of Bob Marley -

“How can you be sitting there telling me that you care? When every time I look around the people suffer in the suffering in every way, in everywhere.”

It calls to mind the Roman historian, Tacitus who quoted a Scottish chief team fighting against the military mate of the Roman empire. A mention only the last two sentences.

“They plunder, they butcher, their ravish... they make it desert and call it ‘peace’.”

They make a desert and they call it peace.

The real tragedy of war is that these children, when they become grandparents will still be answering the innocent questions posed by their grandchildren as to how they lost their limbs. “Granny, how did you lose your leg?”

And when they answer, we run the risk that the violence and hate will be perpetuated for another two to three generations. This is NOT good.

Madame President, it is happening now on our watch.

We can and must do better to secure the peace - in the name of the children.

At the very least the international community must immediately find the funding to support the children of Gaza and the children of Sudan for the next three months. In Gaza it is \$66 million that is needed and \$200 million for Sudan. This money is mostly nutrition related, to reverse or mitigate famine and also to provide water and sanitation and health interventions. We should note that there have been multiple disease outbreaks, including cholera.

So Madam president, to be very clear as I move on, a lasting peace can never be achieved through violence; it can only be achieved through justice and dialogue - talking.

And lest we forget, where others are seeking to build the peace and preserve humanity in Gaza, the international community must not condone the bombing of those states who look to facilitate peace.

It is clear - yes - Mme President that the world is still in need of a reset. We must first and foremost decide whether we still agree on the same set of values that inform the Charter. As simple as it seems, this is a necessary step in any reset. For values have changed in many of

our countries over the last 80 years. We cannot assume that it is business as usual.

In addition to our inability to bring about peace in multiple conflicts, there continues to be a number of issues that threaten our way of life and the stability of our planet:

- The climate crisis;
- Food insecurity, water scarcity;
- Mass flows of refugees and displaced persons;
- Poverty and increasing inequality within and between societies;  
and of course
- Unregulated AI.

Many of our people ask everyday, why has the U.N not done better.

The simple truth is, that countries have lacked the political will to live by the Charter and do what is right for humanity.

Countries of different sizes, capacities and cultures can only survive in the world in which we live if we maintain a rules-based system.

It is no different to what we have to maintain to protect the vulnerable and the weak. This is what protects us from bullying and rogue behavior.

Our Charter was designed to promote compassion, equality, and fairness, and this is why it is imperative that we maintain the rules-based system. I speak as a leader of a small country, our future is placed at risk unless we preserve this rules-based system.

The law of the jungle does not guarantee any of us a future or a livable planet.

If this institution matters, we must simply step up to the plate.

Unlike the Western news Federation, when one country left and one from 10 became zero- we must remember that they want two or three countries leave 193, the sum of what remains does NOT equal 0.

Those who remain can continue to pursue our vital interest - what will strengthen us to build peace or to better face challenges from climate to pandemics to unregulated AI and to build a better life for our people.



There is no doubt that there is a case for efficiency gains to be made in the U.N's institutional framework. But once that is completed, Member states who want or need a rules based order must put their money where their mouth is.

If we are to be protected by a rules-based system, then we must step up to the plate and provide the funds to bridge the gap to deliver the results that we desire. It is as simple as that.

And believe you me, the arithmetic is not that bad. It is within each of our reach. And we do remember the very clear principle - Equality among equals, proportionality among unequals.

And let us remember, while the world confronts these multiple crises there are still some things that have worked for the benefit of our people.

We have adopted a historic Pandemic Agreement to make the world more equitable and safer from future pandemics. A full appreciation of this treaty will only come when the next pandemic hits us.

We have agreed to the Seville Commitment which seeks to fulfil the promise of the Sustainable Development Goals; and which has

mainstreamed a number of financing concepts that were simply not taken into account a decade ago, from debt swaps to natural disaster clauses.

We need to claim it too as was advocated by the Bridgetown Initiative.

We have committed to ambitious global action to combat Anti-Microbial Resistance. I have said repeatedly that this is the silent, slow motion pandemic that threatens to reverse a century of medical progress.

Earlier this week we successfully brought into force the Beyond Boundaries and National Jurisdiction treaty. As a large ocean state, I'm acutely aware of the critical importance to protect our oceans and it's marine biodiversity as a part of the ecological balance of the planet.

We have adopted the ambitious Pact for the Future, which provides a roadmap - a North Star - for our work to protect the and planet of our future.

The two instruments identified by our Secretary-General for regulating AI must now be our priority if we are to avoid severe deepening inequality and leaving our people exposed to the risk of exploitation and the distortion of facts. I must say that Regrettably, I have experienced on a well-known commercial AI platform examples of censorship that seek to deny access to the details of our history in this hemisphere - both in terms of the Barbados Slave Code and the South Carolina Slave Code.

Speaking as a small country, I see no future for myself and my people without a Rules-based system.

Before I go on, let me recognise the outgoing President of the General Assembly, H.E. Philemon Yang for his impactful presidency.

Let me also offer my heartfelt congratulations to H.E. Annalena Baerbock for assuming the presidency.

Barbados looks forward to working closely with you as you execute your vision.

The fact, Madam President, that you are only the fifth woman to occupy this post over the last eighty years is a cause both for profound concern, but renewed optimism.

This is a testament to the very point I am seeking to make. This organisation is working - but, we still have so, so much to do.

Madam President,

On climate and finance, there is a real danger that debates in this great chamber, at the Conference of the Parties and elsewhere, risk being reduced to mere performative exercises.

We have watched the widely celebrated green wave which swept Europe in 2019, recede and in its backwash that continent now faces deep division over the scale, scope and speed of delivery on commitments made to eliminate climate harming pollution by 2050.

Others have withdrawn from the Paris Agreement.

At a time, Madam President, when we should be conducting an audit of the achieved targets and accomplished deliverables, we continue, for the most part, to receive IOU's and statements of deferred intent.

Even as we have witnessed this vacillation, we have seen a re-dedication to breathing new life into high carbon and high polluting forms of energy. And, we have also witnessed a re-doubling of efforts to fund military build-ups, even at the expense of financing our way to sustainability and a hospitable planet.

Barbados does not treat climate science as a mere conjecture. And neither does the ICJ nor the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. Their advisory opinions have affirmed the legal rights and entitlements of citizens who must, on a daily basis, confront the impact of the climate crisis.

In this regard, we especially welcome the ICJ ruling to the effect that States have obligations to protect the climate system and other parts of the environment from emissions, and that those obligations can be enforced against other States.

Given this new reality as we look ahead, we must seize the opportunity to find COMMON ground on the question of the climate crisis.

I propose that one possible way forward is to focus on emissions rather than the fossil fuel industry. As I have said before the fossil fuel industry is not the enemy -it is the emissions.

In this regard, we should consider working towards a globally legally binding framework on methane which could contribute to reversing global temperature rise by half a degree, while purchasing time to scale up to a commercial level, the use of decarbonising technology.

The Baku to Belém Roadmap must ensure that the necessary resources—\$1.3 trillion annually by 2035—are not only committed. But it is the political will and ingenuity of countries and financial institutions that will ensure that the sums are actually delivered.

It must not suffer the same fate as the Loss and Damage Fund, which for example, despite its historic establishment, remains grossly under-capitalized, with less than \$800 million pledged and only half of those pledges actually materialized.

This ambivalence towards finance and fiscal space is what gave birth to the Bridgetown Initiative. Its latest iteration Bridgetown 3.0 will shortly be reviewed given the rapidly changing global environment.

We still need to expand liquidity support and to close the financing gap required to assist vulnerable countries - especially the V20 countries - in building their resilience.

I am conscious of the progress by which multilateral institutions have taken onboard some of our arguments in the BI, especially as it relates to climate finance and to the issue of vulnerability - debt swaps and Climate Resilient Debt Clauses .

Madam President,

All of these goals – and many more – can be achieved by a fully functional rules-based system. A system that is ambitious in its goals, effective in its delivery and fair in its organisation.

As the UN80 process seeks to enhance the functioning of this organisation, we must ensure that the initiatives we put in place are not the exclusive outgrowth of budget constraints and cost-cutting exercises, but are instead, people-focused and delivery driven, providing the global population with the peace and security, and the quality of life that it deserves and is increasingly demanding.

To effect this, the Security Council must be reformed. It must reflect the multipolar world that now exists, and the substantial geopolitical shifts that have occurred in the intervening years since its last reform in 1962.

Permanent seats for Africa and a seat that revolves for SIDS are an essential part of that reform.

You really cannot ask us to show up for family photos and votes when you need them and then exclude us from the family's decision making as if you are the grown-ups and we are the children. We are not minors but independent sovereign states with full capacity and we insist on being treated as such.

Madam President,

I have left the peace and security situation in our region, the Caribbean. It is deeply troubling.

For example:

Haiti, once a beacon of emancipation and revolution, is today a victim of centuries of external interference and contemporary internal conflict.



We thank Kenya for its extraordinary leadership of the Multinational Security Support mission, and look forward to the enhanced support of the UN Security Council and the Organisation of the American States.

Haiti requires a long term support plan addressing security and development needs. With the requisite political will, the UN Security Council and the international development system are well-equipped to deliver.

We urge dialogue with our friends and partners especially in the United States on the inescapable issue of the flow of small arms and light weapons not only into Haiti, but across this hemisphere. Fragile economies in the democracies of the Caribbean Community are now being threatened by this incessant flow of illegally obtained weapons and the increasingly organised criminal elements which utilise them.

We thank Secretary General Guterres for his unswerving support we need others to join now to ensure Haiti can turn the corner and prepare itself for free and fair democratic elections.

Madam President,

Cuba, has long been a source of support for many across the globe in times of conflict, health crisis and colonial resistance. Cuba has however, paid a high price for insisting on its right to self-determination. Again, we must be prepared to engage in dialogue in order to stop the disproportionate suffering and deprivation being inflicted on the Cuban society by what is now globally seen to be an unjust embargo and other unilateral coercive measures. Barbados reiterates its calls for the end of the embargo and removal of Cuba from the list of State Sponsors of Terrorism.

What is even more in the Caribbean Sea, we are witnessing a shocking violation of a hemispheric understanding that the Caribbean be treated as a Zone of Peace.

There has been a build up in military assets in the Caribbean by both sides, the United States and Venezuela. We believe that any such build up could occasion even an accident can put the Southern Caribbean at disproportionate risk. It is not acceptable for us to be viewed as collateral damage.

Full respect for the territorial integrity of each, and every state in the Caribbean must be respected.

Almost all wars end as a result of dialogue, let us make a greater effort to have the necessary conversations that are needed to prevent war.

As I close today, I leave you with the image that has stayed with me for the last week of a young Palestinian girl of six or seven years old, walking in the midst of the rubble in Gaza. Her eyes were hollow and full of despair. It was clear that she was in great pain. She carried her sister on her shoulders, clearly recognizing that it was she who would have to carry the burden of taking them to safety.

This is the ultimate picture of hope and resilience.

Let us be inspired that even in the face of the greatest adversity and challenge, we can rise. If a six-year-old can push past all the physical and emotional pain and still find hope that there is a better moment ahead of her then we have a duty as leaders to summon that spirit.

My friends, the world needs it now more than ever. It is not beyond us to forge a better world that is fair and just. 80 years ago a few

countries summoned that will. Today those of us who were denied the right to be heard at that time can be the core responders to this critical clarion call.

Inspired by the words of my own anthem, upward and onwards, we shall go, Inspired exulting free - and greater will our WORLD grow in strength and unity.

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