



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

STATEMENT BY DR. THE HONOURABLE TIMOTHY S. HARRIS

PRIME MINISTER OF SAINT KITTS AND NEVIS

AT THE

UNITED NATIONS SUMMIT FOR THE ADOPTION OF THE

2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

NEW YORK, NY

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A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR ALL**

Your Excellency, President of the 70th Regular Session; His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-Moon, Secretary General; Distinguished Heads of State and Government, and other Heads of Delegation; Excellencies; Ladies and Gentlemen:

We, the member states are at the cusp of another remarkable opportunity to transform the human landscape in ways that could redefine the future for so many of our peoples. I am therefore delighted to participate in this historic Summit to adopt the Post 2015 Development Agenda and with it, the Sustainable Development Goals.

We have come a long way since the establishment of the MDGs fifteen years ago and although success has sometimes been scarce, we can take comfort in knowing that millions of people have been lifted out of poverty, millions more have had improved access to education and the prevalence of the dreaded HIV/AIDS pandemic has diminished.

Mr. President, as many here have intimated, this is a significant moment for the United Nations. It is refreshing to see that even at 70, the United Nations General Assembly can take youthful strides of optimism towards the future.

As we bring in the post-2015 period and the Sustainable Development Goals, please allow me a brief moment to reflect on the very origins of the period that is now coming to a close.

For most of us, the MDG process was a watershed, a period of unprecedented scope and promise, and which, I am pleased to say, did deliver on many targets, but regrettably, fell short on others.

As the post-2015 period begins, the new Team Unity Government in St. Kitts and Nevis is committed to working internationally to bring about transformational changes in programs and policies that benefit all our peoples. We fully support the Outcome Document of this Summit, “Transforming Our World”, and we will remain focused on the fulfillment of the Goals and Targets.

The pursuit of the Post-2015 Development Agenda and SDG 2030 is an organic process for us simply because in St. Kitts and Nevis, we have a people-centered government. It is a government focused and working for the sustainable development of our people. We are continuing to increase access for all to high quality healthcare; upgrading the delivery, rigor and relevance of primary and secondary education - which is compulsory for all children from age five to sixteen.

In addition, we are reforming our laws to attract the right investments in priority areas to stimulate economic growth, diversification and economic activity which will give our young people better access to reliable and decent work. We are determined to preserve the dignity and human rights of our people. We will champion policies for good governance, transparency, social equity, justice, security and prosperity for all.

Our Government is fully committed to these Sustainable Development Goals which simply, philosophically and fundamentally embody the genuine aspirations of our people. We welcome the SDG 2030 Agenda and are glad to see them being prioritized during this Summit.

I must say that as a vulnerable small island state, elements such as SDG 13 on Climate Change and SDG 14 on Oceans and Seas are especially pleasing.

Climate Change is an existential threat to our islands. Our reality is that our coastlines are wearing away, our pristine beaches - essential to our tourism industry, hence our economic survival - are also slowly disappearing year after year. Droughts are now more prolonged, severe and frequent. This year for example, we in St Kitts and Nevis suffered one of the most prolonged and severe drought spells. The consequence has been water rationing for the consuming public.

We are witnessing the destruction to our livelihood by natural disasters and sea level rise. We do not know from one year to the next which island will be devastated or set back decades in development. This is why forums such as the UNFCCC negotiations are so important to us given the imperative of making sure that we have a realistic and comprehensive agreement in Paris for COP21, later this year.

The response to climate change requires input from all nations large and small. Taiwan with its advanced renewable energy technologies should be allowed to participate in relevant international meetings and mechanisms such as the UNFCCC and the UN Environmental Assembly

Regrettably, our Oceans and Seas have been neglected and as a result are suffering from increasing incidents of pollution, coral degradation and over- exploitation. It is important to note that St. Kitts and Nevis, a small island state with a landmass of roughly 105 square miles has a territorial maritime space in excess of 12,427 square miles. Therefore, our future lies not only on land but also in the sea. We will move to delineate our boundaries with our neighbours, so that we may better utilize this unexploited frontier in our efforts to enhance development.

Our Oceans and Seas impact on our economic, social, and environmental well-being and they are critical to the future livelihood of the islands and coastal communities. The Sea is key to our national survival, to our food security, the creation

of more decent jobs and potentially home to untapped resources.

As a small island developing country we understand the relationship between renewable energy, food security, and sustainable development. Hence, we are making investments in renewables including geothermal, wind and solar energy and are developing programs to optimize the synergies. Fortunately, we have a population with a 98% literacy rate, which will enhance our efforts towards full implementation of SDG 2030. Mr. President, because the very ethos of our mandate as a Government is echoed in these SDGs, I can assure you, the SDG Agenda for us is not mere targets on an international schedule; they are material to our daily national reality. We want our people to succeed and prosper, and we promise our people a fair share for all.

Therefore, our government will continue to embed legislative frameworks that cement our democracy and institutions. We will design more programs to promote healthier lives and lifestyles; to eradicate poverty, enhance quality education, and ensure gender equality and human rights for all.

That said, notwithstanding our bilateral partnerships for effective and inclusive development and the work we are doing locally; none of our countries can do it alone. We need real support to implement the 2030 Agenda. Therefore, international financing for sustainable development has to be an overarching priority. Better south-south, north-south and triangular cooperation is necessary

Serious consideration should be given to the proposals advanced by the Commonwealth Finance Ministers who repeatedly stressed the importance of finding innovative strategies for helping small developing states gain access to international sources of funding.

Dominica's devastation by Tropical Storm Erika highlights the vulnerability of SIDS and why development cannot be taken for granted. It also makes a cogent point that the graduation of SIDS on basis of per capita income is imprudent in the context of our vulnerability.

Over the last 15 years, we learned valuable lessons. We observed that success requires continuing commitment, institutional backing, adequate financing and effective implementation. Today, we have an opportunity to build on the gains of the MDG process. How we proceed will determine whether future generations look back at this the 70th year as a genuine watershed or simply another missed opportunity.

This United Nations has proven its mettle in the past and it can rise to the challenge again.

I am optimistic. The world has cause for optimism. St. Kitts and Nevis supports this process, these Goals and the ideals of our United Nations. We will therefore play our active role in creating a sustainable future for all.

I thank you.