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STATEMENT

By

CAMILLO M. GONSALVES

PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES TO THE UNITED NATIONS

ON BEHALF OF THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY
(CARICOM)

AGENDA ITEM 51:
“GLOBALISATION AND INTERDEPENDENCE”

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Madam Chair,

It is a distinct honour for me today to address this Committee on behalf of the 14 Member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) on agenda item 51, entitled “*Globalisation and Interdependence*,” and its related sub items. CARICOM also aligns itself with the statements made by Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China in this regard.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt congratulations to you on your election as Chair of this Committee, and also to convey our appreciation to the Secretary-General for the Reports that have been submitted to guide our discussion on this agenda item, particularly the Reports contained in documents A/63/333 (“Impact of Globalisation on the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals”) and A/63/265 (“International migration and development”).

Madam Chair,

In some respects, the phrase “Globalisation and interdependence” is almost tautological, in that the concept of Globalisation – as a form of economic organization – cannot be divorced from the fact that its processes foster greater interdependence between and among states. This interdependence is apparent in each of the five forces outlined in the Secretary-General’s Report as powering Globalisation – finance, trade, investment, technology and migration.

Globalisation has rendered moot the 16th Century meditation that “no man is an island.” To the Caribbean Community, it is now a truism that no *island* is an island. The tides of Globalisation that circle the globe wash our shores with its benefits, burdens and unintended systemic consequences.

The efficacy of Globalisation, and its continued credibility to CARICOM and the developing world, depends not on broad statistics suggesting global economic growth, but rather on tangible improvements in the quality of life and choices available to our citizens. As stated in the Secretary-General’s Report, “Development must therefore be placed at the centre in considering how Globalisation is managed, rather than viewing it as a by-product of Globalisation.” Without a development-centered *raison d’être*, the people of the Caribbean will be hard-pressed to distinguish – in real terms – between Globalisation and previous economic offerings by developed countries, which did not attempt to present themselves as anything other than exploitative.

The measurable benefits of Globalisation are numerous and indisputable. As a rising tide with the potential to lift all ships, Globalisation has become the compelling narrative around which the global economic system is organised. However, Globalisation and interdependence have brought to our shores a number of significant external developmental challenges that are neither of our making nor within our ability to individually correct. The Caribbean is on the front line of the fallout from Climate Change, to which we contribute only negligibly. The global trade in small arms and drugs like cocaine is tearing holes in the fabric of our societies, though we do not produce these weapons or commodities. The crises in food and energy prices have caused severe hardship and social unrest in our Region. Trade-distorting subsidies and barriers continue to be applied in a manner that renders our own nascent industries uncompetitive. The rule-based systems that undergird Globalisation have made insufficient allowances for the economies of

Small Island Developing States, like ours, and have uprooted our traditional agricultural livelihoods. And while we continue to meet and exceed standards on good governance, open borders and economic liberalisation, developed nations continue to skirt their trade obligations and renege on their developmental pledges, to the detriment of our collective advancement.

This brief litany of the Globalisation and interdependence-related challenges facing our Region – while by no means exhaustive – illustrates that interdependence speaks not only to the relationships among states, but among the challenges themselves. Climate change affects agriculture, which affects food availability, which affects poverty, which affects the type of advice and assistance we receive from global financial institutions. The interrelated and interdependent complexity of the challenges facing our region is a critical consideration informing our developmental decisions.

Indeed, the importance of external global forces to the small and vulnerable societies of the Caribbean cannot be overstated. Increasingly, Globalisation plays as critical a role in the development of CARICOM member States as does the actual decisions and policies implemented by our governments. However, unlike governments, Globalisation is neither responsive to nor motivated by the needs of our small populations.

Globalisation has placed the Member States of CARICOM in an awkward developmental position. The existing rules and understandings of the global financial order have placed a glass ceiling on economic growth and developmental progress that we are as yet unable to break through. However, our people are thankfully not facing some of the severe developmental crises of other countries and regions. We are stuck between success and failure, and its unclear whether Globalisation offers a compelling path to States like ours, which, despite our misleading per capita averages, retain deep and intractable pockets of severe poverty, and highly vulnerable economies, whose fragile successes can be reversed by a single natural disaster or global financial meltdown.

The interdependencies inherent in Globalisation are on stark display today, as the world wrestles with a financial crisis of epic proportions. The naked and unregulated greed of a few rapacious financial institutions has flung the world's financial markets into a tailspin and prompted an unprecedented global response by economic powers. The governments of the Caribbean have played no role in this crisis. Yet, in myriad ways – from the availability of credit, to the impact on our tourism industries, to the effects on investment, and the threats to our remittance flows – the crisis can and will negatively affect our region.

However, CARICOM urges that donor countries resist the temptation to curtail Official Development Assistance in response to the financial crisis. The commitments made in this regard have been too long unfulfilled, even in times of global prosperity, and cannot be further delayed or avoided. Indeed a countercyclical increase in ODA may be advisable to cushion the impact of the crisis, not in the global financial capitals, but in the streets and villages of the developing world. It would be most unfortunate if this financial crisis joined climate change, the food crisis, and the energy crisis as another global malady that most disproportionately affects those who are least responsible for its creation.

The Secretary-General's Report makes it abundantly clear that the promised benefits of Globalisation have been neither universally achieved nor uniformly distributed. In many cases,

the statistical improvements have been negligible, when weighed against the social upheaval caused by pro-Globalisation policies. Too often, Globalisation presents states with uncomfortable and countervailing choices between pro-business, pro-Globalisation orthodoxy, and the compelling near term needs of our citizens. Our challenge as the United Nations is to reconfigure the architecture of Globalisation such that it becomes more people centered, and less preoccupied with Globalisation for the sake of Globalisation. We must judge, refine and measure Globalisation through the prism of development, not simply, measurement, as stated in the Secretary-General's report, of the "volume of international trade and flows of capital, migration levels and the overseas holding of assets."

Madam Chair,

There is perhaps no more relevant context in which to discuss the complex and multidimensional phenomenon of migration than the context of globalisation and interdependence. Indeed, CARICOM recognises the important link between migration and other global phenomena including poverty and income inequality; unemployment/ underemployment; capital flows, trade imbalances and debt sustainability; and understands that these issues must be considered together in order to truly grasp the challenges involved. For the Caribbean – a region made up of both sending and receiving States – these challenges are legion. The impacts of migration are both positive and negative and include the loss or gain of skilled labour; movement of temporary workers; flows of remittances; human trafficking and returning migrants – voluntary and through forced repatriation to the Region.

In view of the complex nature of migration and its attendant challenges, CARICOM also acknowledges the need to address migration in a global context, and in a manner that allows us to maximise the development benefits of international migration and minimise its negative impacts. In this connection, CARICOM welcomed the 2006 High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, as well as the opportunity to decide on the most suitable follow-up mechanism. In this regard, CARICOM sees value in the Global Forum on Migration initiative and awaits the outcome of the Second Global Forum in the Philippines. However, we do not feel that such a Forum should preclude the consideration of a more systematic and comprehensive dialogue within the context of the United Nations. Accordingly, CARICOM looks forward to a discussion within the Committee on the potential benefits of such a dialogue as well as on the shape that dialogue would take, including its possible link to existing migration-related mechanisms.

Madam Chair,

As a region so culturally distinct, it would be remiss of CARICOM not to comment on agenda sub item 51(c), "*culture and development*."

Globalisation has spawned a creeping cultural hegemony and homogeneity with a distinct western and mass consumption bias. Indigenous cultures the world over are at risk of being supplanted by a shallow consumer ethic driven by multinational corporations whose sole interest is to create a standardized population of global purchasers. The explosion in media and informational technology, for all its obvious benefits, has been an all-too-willing handmaiden to this cultural attrition.

As a region that has grappled with the evils of slavery and colonisation, we in CARICOM recognise the role played by cultural bigotry in our own Caribbean history. Today, a fundamental cultural bigotry lies just beneath the surface of countless global conflicts. It is a bigotry that we in CARICOM continue to decry, and we stand willing to join all Member States in combating destructive intolerance.

Madam Chair,

While cultures can and must remain diverse, as glorious threads in the tapestry of our human existence, some basic human rights are universal, and rise above the vagaries of cultural differences.. Chief among them is the sovereign right to peaceful self-determination. The new religion of globalism cannot mean that it is heresy to forge uniquely local solutions to uniquely local problems. One size, or one solution, does not fit all, and our right to fashion our own solutions to issues of governance, education, energy and foreign policy – to name a few – cannot be impugned.

An understanding of, and respect for, culture and diversity is key to development in a globalised world. As the world gets increasingly smaller and more interconnected, diverse cultures and civilisations are coming into greater and more frequent contact with each other. Whether these civilisations clash or coexist has critical developmental implications. We in CARICOM believe that our own rich cultural heritage is crucial to our economic and social development. A development-centered Globalisation process will, by its very nature, show us what we have in common. But it can and must also celebrate and ennoble that which makes us unique.

I thank you.