

Barbados Statement at UNGA76 General Debate

September 24, 2021

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Prime Minister of Barbados

Mdme Vice President,

CONGRATULATIONS TO SG, DSG and the President.

If I used the speech prepared for me to deliver today, it will be a repetition. A repetition of what you have heard from others, and also from me.

I cannot deliver that speech. I will not repeat my statements of previous years. Why? Because we have not moved on. We have not moved the needle!

Three years ago, in September 2018 when I delivered my maiden speech to the United Nations right here at this very podium, I told the international community then that the world appeared perilously similar to how it was 100 years ago.

I am not here to say "I told you so". But I will say that we must move the needle! We must lead - and we must act.

[Pause]

How many variants of Covid-19 must arrive, [Pause]
Before a worldwide vaccination plan is implemented?

How many deaths must it take, [Pause]
Before 1.7bn excess vaccines are shared?

How much more fake news will we allow to be spread without states defending the public digital spaces? We have come together with alacrity to defend the right of states to tax across the digital space but we are not prepared to come together quickly to defend the right of our citizens not to be duped by fake news in that same space.

Yes, and how many surges must there be, [Pause]
Before we genuinely believe that none are safe till all are safe?

The answer, Mr President, [Pause] is that we are waiting,
Waiting for global moral strategic leadership.

[Pause]

How much must global temperatures rise, [Pause]
Before we end the burning of fossil fuels?

How much must sea levels climb, [Pause]
Before those who profited from stockpiling greenhouse gases contribute to the loss and damage they caused?

And yes, how much must hurricanes destroy, locusts devour, and islands submerge, [Pause]
Before we recognise that \$100bn is not enough?

The answer Mr President, is that we are waiting for urgent leadership.

[Pause]

How many crises need to hit, [Pause]
Before we see that the international system divides, not lifts? How many more times when we talk about the plate of the people of Cuba and Haiti and nothing simply happen.

How many crises and natural disasters need to hit [Pause]
Before we see that old conventions of aid mean that assistance does not reach the newly vulnerable?

Yes, and how much wealthier must tech firms get, [Pause]
Before we worry about how so few have access to data and knowledge?

The answer to Mr President is that we have the means to give every child a tablet, every adult a vaccine, and invest in protecting those most vulnerable from a changing climate, but we chose not to.
We do not fear the consequences enough.

[Pause]

How many times must leaders come to talk and not be heard, [Pause]
Before they stop coming?

How many times must we talk about making the decision-making institutions more representative of the world [Pause]
Before international institutions become derelict just as we need them most?

Equally how many more times will we see people of colour and women attacked disproportionately as they seek to lead international Organisations?

And yes, how many times must great needs be met by goodwill and nice words, only,
Before nationalism and militarism return?

The answer Mr President is that this age dangerously resembles that similarly unequal world, on
the eve of the Great Depression and world war,

The world knows not what it is gambling with,
If we do not control this fire, it will burn us all down. As I said 2 years ago and as you said on
Tuesday - THIS IS NOT A SCIENCE
FICTION MOVIE. THIS IS OUR REALITY.
Now is the time for leadership.

The SG's speech says it all but who will stand and support him and display the political will so
that he and Dr Tedros and Kristalina and Malpass can act in the interest of the majority of our
people.

Who will sign the NEW CHARTER FOR THE 21st century that will bring hope and progress for
our people now?

In the words of Robert Nestor Marley who will get up and stand up?

Who will get up and stand up for the rights of the people for us?

Who will stand up in the name of all those who have died during this awful pandemic?

Who will stand up in the name of all those who have died because of the climate crisis?

Who will stand up a cop 26 foot small island developing states for 1.5 to survive?

Who will stand up for all those who continue to suffer in the indignity of unemployment and
under employment?

Who will stand up for our children who simply want to learn mad to live in a world without being
forced into migration?

We have been told that democracy is fundamentally about the will of the majority.
If that is the means something in this international community in this global civilization, the
question must be when therefore will the majority of nation states and citizens of the world have
the right to shape the destiny of this world? This is not 1945 with only 50 countries signing the
Charter.

Our voices must be heard and must matter.

It is against this background - the fact that we are at a fork on the road -that Barbados calls today on the nation states of this Assembly and people of the world to indicate the direction that we must go in to save our planet and to save our people. We will move a resolution in plenary to endorse the direction proposed by the Secretary General in his speech and Our Common Agenda. And we will reach out to the people of the world directly especially our young people whose world it is that is in peril So that we may bills that correlation of global moral strategic leadership... Religious leaders, youth leaders, business leaders, civil society, artists and sportsmen whose influence is significant.

As I told himWe share his philosophy we want the same destination as he does the question is simply which road when we take and how will we avoid the potholes and obstacles in the road.

We leave UNGA in need of another UNGA.

LET US HAVE THR REAL ENGAGEMENT OF LEADERS THAT SG GUTERRES HAS CALLED FOR.

THANK YOU.