



STATEMENT

BY

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MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
AND FOREIGN TRADE**

AT THE

**GENERAL DEBATE
OF THE
SIXTY-SIXTH SESSION OF
THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

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**PERMANENT MISSION OF BELIZE
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

Mr. President,

It is an honour for me to deliver this address on behalf of the people and Government of Belize. It is a particular privilege to do so with you at the helm of the Assembly. I say so because Mr. President, Belize has the distinct pleasure of having you as the Ambassador of Qatar to Belize, a role in which you have distinguished yourself and your nation, much as you are doing in your role as the President of this Assembly.

Mr. President,

Today's world is characterized by disputes between neighbouring states which have resulted and continue to result in untold damage, loss of life and financial ruin to the feuding states. Thus your selection of the theme "mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes" for this year's general debate is a timely and appropriate one. We in Belize fully subscribe to the view that mediation is a much more sensible means of bringing an end to disputes than the use of force and threats of force especially in the case of neighbouring states whose people have to live side by side and who are interdependent upon each other for their survival and security.

But today's world is also characterized by widespread anxiety, insecurity, unrest, violence and instability. This is manifested in our financial markets as well as in the streets of cities in the developed as well as in the developing world. Threats, both natural and manmade appear to be proliferating. Debt crises are now so globalized that they are dwarfing national fiscal and policy space. Drugs, arms and human trafficking dominate the global stage while mother nature is undergoing extreme changes which leave death, destruction and disaster in her wake.

Thus far the international responses to these catastrophic occurrences have been both uninspiring and inadequate.

Notwithstanding the armory of human rights that are enshrined in our own Human Rights Charter, far too many people are still destitute, are still dying from hunger, are still casualties of preventable or curable diseases, are still illiterate, are still jobless and are still marginalized and excluded from their societies.

Three years after the 2008 economic and financial crisis, the global economy is once more bracing for another setback as the recovery in major industrialized economies suffer and face the very real danger of being reversed. Terrorism remains no less a global threat. Mortality from non communicable diseases now rival mortality from communicable diseases. And, green house gas emissions continues to fuel global warming at a perilous rate.

Faced with the plethora of ills that now beset our world we in Belize entertain no doubt that if any institution holds the key to solving the world problems it is this august body, the United Nations, and its various agencies and institutions.

Belize, therefore, is looking to this United Nations to partner with us in combating the three most serious threats which presently confront us. These are the threat posed by climate change, the threat posed by crime and violence, and the threat posed by chronic non communicable diseases.

For Small Island and coastal states like Belize, global warming poses an existential threat. We are already being overwhelmed by the nature scale and frequency of the damage that extreme weather conditions triggered by global warming are wreaking on our infrastructure and on our marine and terrestrial organisms. While we appreciate that we are primarily responsible for our own welfare and are taking full measures as are within our competence to cope with our changing circumstances, climate change is a global problem which requires a global response based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibility.

To this end some small island and coastal states including Belize are moving resolutely towards low carbon and no carbon emission economies. Today, twenty-four of us are partners in an innovative sustainable energy initiative called SIDS DOCK aimed at transforming our energy sector and catalyzing our sustainable economic development. However, if we are to be successful in our initiative we will require the delivery of the much promised transfer of environmentally friendly technologies and new and additional funding promised by the international community.

In this regard we view the upcoming Durban conference as being very important. We believe that every effort should be made at the conference to forge a climate change regime that will incentivize emission reduction and the protection and preservation of existing forests while simultaneously creating disincentives to pollution. Additionally clear, legally binding rules must also be hammered out with a view to guaranteeing the environmental integrity of our countries.

Mr. President,

Over the last decade crime and violence in Belize and the rest of Central America have escalated drastically resulting in some 18,167 homicides. However, none of the arms used in these murders are produced in Central America. They are the product of the illicit trafficking in guns and drugs between South and North America. The transnational nature of these crimes is exacerbated by the cross border collaboration of criminals. This type of criminal activity clearly requires the collaboration and cooperation of the international community if it is to be combated successfully.

We in Belize have stepped up our efforts nationally and in conjunction with our neighbours in Central America, the Caribbean and the United States to combat the activity of these criminals, but the going is difficult and progress is slow. We need more help from the international community. Specifically we need a universally applicable normative framework to regulate the trade in arms such as an Arms Trade Treaty that is legally binding, robust, and comprehensive. One which establishes the highest possible

standards for the transfer of conventional arms, especially small arms, light weapons and ammunities.

Mr. President,

I now turn to some of the silent killers that are ravaging our Latin America and Caribbean communities – the chronic non communicable diseases. In the Caribbean today, NCDs are responsible for sixty-two percent (62%) of deaths, forty percent (40%) of which occur prematurely. If this trend continues NCDs will account for three out of four deaths in the Caribbean by the year 2030. Again Mr. President, these diseases can only be combated effectively through the collaborative efforts of the international community.

In this connection we welcome the conclusion of the recently held high-level Meeting as the first comprehensive global political declaration addressing chronic non communicable diseases. This should serve as a template for action at all levels. We will eagerly await the development of indicators and global targets aimed at achieving a twenty-five percent reduction in NCD related deaths by 2025. This will no doubt necessitate close collaboration and cooperation between governments, international organizations, civil society and the private sector to facilitate access to medicines and healthy foods. Belize is committed to the support of this initiative unconditionally.

Mr. President,

Belize is of the view that given the quantum and scale of the problems which confront the world today and the unquestioned need for an ever increasing amount of resources, the international community cannot afford not to avail itself of every source of assistance that is to hand. And, in that regard, we would wish to urge that the Republic of China (Taiwan) be allowed to participate meaningfully in the work of the United Nations. In a similar vein we would urge that the embargo against Cuba which this assembly has denounced for many years be brought to an end.

Finally Mr President,

While Belize appreciates the limitations of this United Nations, we also appreciate that there exists no better institution than this one which is dedicated to world peace, security, justice and development. And even as we seek its reform, we recognize its primacy in international affairs and global governance. I assure you that Belize is fully committed to work in it, through it, and with it as it carries out its mandates.

I thank you.