

Statement by Ambassador Dessima M. Williams, Permanent Representative of Grenada to the UN, at the Informal Plenary Meeting on the Question of Equitable Representation and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council. March 17, 2009.

Mr. Chairman,

I thank you and the President of the General Assembly for your collective leadership which is bringing us along in this Security Council Reform negotiations, in response to G.A. Res. 62/557. Thank you, too, for your most helpful briefing note of Friday March 13, 2009. Let me say we are hoping for success in these negotiations.

Similar to other CARICOM colleagues before me, my delegation associates itself fully with the statement made by Ambassador Raymond Wolfe of Jamaica on behalf of CARICOM. My intervention intends to reinforce that position.

Grenada speaks within a framework informed by perspectives and positions anchored in careful study, including the 2005 call of World Leaders, of whom CARICOM leaders are a part, and who have also expressed themselves elsewhere.

Inescapably for Grenada, that framework is one intended to pursue basic principles of sovereign equality of states, democratic international relations, and for an increase in the legitimacy of the Security Council so it can be more effective, and an increase in its effectiveness because it becomes more legitimate. Early in the 21st century, the democratic governance of our United Nations, to which all these principles can be applied, are completely relevant and recognized by Grenada's foreign policy.

Grenada's contribution to this particular sub-theme of UN Security Council Reform, namely, the "question of the veto" is thus focused on achieving participation, openness and accountability, all of which undergird legitimacy and effectiveness of the Council, and thus of the larger UN system.

The Question of the Veto

The idea of mandatory "concurring votes of the permanent members" of the Security Council, as contained in Article 27, para 3 of the UN Charter, or what has become "**a right of veto**" as well as its "**pocket version**" the threat of the veto, constitute the *poto mitan* or main supporting bean that holds up what is most unacceptable about the Security Council. Whatever the intention of the framers of the Charter, this concurrence of votes in the council has led to a closed and exclusive system not acceptable to our

body politic -- not in the past, and certainly not today. Dissatisfaction with the veto and its consequences is widespread enough to have brought us here. No one can doubt that **the veto** has been a barrier to the principle of equity and equality in the conduct of international diplomacy; especially 60 years after San Francisco; even San Francisco's leadership has democratized itself beyond 1945!

Academic and political arguments for the retention of the veto are numerous. For example, some academics argue that the veto is the result of "a pre-charter political understanding", which has been "at the core of the system of collective security" and is the Council's "sustaining force." But other scholars clarify that the veto has mostly helped the P-5 themselves, a balance of power among them: That is, the veto has been keeping each of them at the table, helping *them* act together and predict each other more than it has been the saving grace for billions of people worldwide in a routine and steady manner. One cannot argue then, that this has been a tool of inclusivity that engenders democratic governance among member states.

The veto as it stands today, or will continue to be, if left undisturbed after our negotiations conclude, will not contribute to internal peace and cooperation within the UN system, since it has lost its standing, if it ever had any, for it is like an emperor with no clothes finally seen.

Statements and sentiments yesterday, and I am sure before that, attest to the fact that while it is true that the veto can be discussed along with expansion in size of Council membership and other operational modalities, that does not detract from the fact that we can take decisive action on the veto itself—now.

That is why in this vastly changed world from 1945, Grenada's first preference is for the removal of the veto. To answer one of the 'cuestiones' from yesterday, let me say that to call for its removal is realistic, that is, if we ever care to marry our actions to our preachings on democracy, equality and the like. But the craft of successful negotiations forces us, for now, to wedge ourselves, in the space St. Vincent and the Grenadines so elegantly identified, that is, between principle and pragmatism as we struggle with complexities and differences.

Mr. Chairman, Grenada calls for, first, that all positions be placed on the table and be given respect and discussion; our negotiations must be thorough and must have integrity.

Second, starting right now, Grenada calls for the veto **not** to be used in situations of genocide, war crimes and other crimes against humanity. Thus calls for voluntary compliance on matters can begin with voluntary veto suspension of a near universally

agreed-to position, and that will be a sign of good faith from those currently holding the veto that they can be trusted with the clear and renewed will of member states.

Third, we call for the removal of concurrence, that is, the end of veto. Mr. Chairman, ceasing to use it in the instances I and many, many others have mentioned, will give the P-5 the practice of not relying on it. And that could and should lead to an not *using* it, and thus not *needing* and not having it.

Fourth, given that the enlargement of the Council is part and parcel of a package of reforms toward the goal of better representation and of democratization, which we support, we agree that new permanent members must be brought in to the Council. Of them, whomsoever they are, no less must be asked and no more expected. They too, in the exercise of their stewardship, must receive benefits and abide by constraints.

Lastly, Mr. Chairman, we would support override mechanisms in the Security Council itself as well as in the General Assembly, to override a veto on a matter that a majority of states feels strongly about.

In summary, Mr. Chairman, these are times which are demanding attention to climate change security, financial and economic security, security for small and vulnerable states and a plethora of 21st century global issues demanding new and improved political management; the UN governance architecture must be provided with the capacity with which to do so: openness and sincerity towards negotiations; some immediate trust-building measures on the part of the present council membership; new and more democratic rules; even oversight and expanded membership with rights and responsibilities.

Mr. Chairman, let us not be afraid of change. One academic writer said in 2004 of the Security Council that "reform of the council remains a live issue ...but one exhibiting little energy". Let us prove him wrong, and energize ourselves toward the required reform.

The Caribbean is a model of change, that, amid all fears, has improved the condition of humanity.

The region's Nobel Laureate in Literature, St. Lucian national, Derek Walcott, reminds us of how completely important it is to take risk when, in receiving his Nobel prize in December 1992, he celebrated change when he said: (I quote) "Break a vase, and

the love that reassembles the fragments is stronger than that love which took its symmetry for granted when it was whole.". Walcott goes on to say that in breaking with the past, in our case reforming the concurrence taken as veto, the original structure (of the old security council) can fade away from exhaustion, "like "a fog trying to cross an ocean."

Mr. Chairman, *the Security Council has come a long distance in 60 years, and it is exhausted*, which is why we are in these Intergovernmental Negotiations: the Security Council, now an old man, must be helped to cross the ocean of the 20th century and come ashore into the 21st century.

To do so, along with all other changes, the veto must do.

The words of the Caribbean Feminist Movement of the 1980s, singing with determination for change, is applicable here. Singing for change, we insisted: "*Mother the Great Stone got to go!*" *I say, we in CARICOM say, Mother the Veto got to go!*"

I thank you Mr. Chairman.