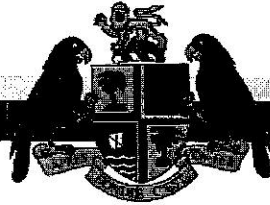


COMMONWEALTH OF DOMINICA



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UNITED NATIONS

62nd Session of the General Assembly

Third Committee

Debate on

Agenda Items:

70(a) Elimination of Racism and Racial Discrimination

70(b) Comprehensive Implementation of and Follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action

Statement by

H.E. Mr. Crispin S. Gregoire
Permanent Representative of the Commonwealth of Dominica

on behalf of

The Caribbean Community (CARICOM)

New York, 7 November 2007

Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of the 14 Member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM)- Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago-I have the honour to address this committee on agenda item 70(a) *Elimination of Racism and Racial Discrimination*, and agenda item 70(b) *Comprehensive Implementation of and Follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action*.

Mr. Chairman,

On the 26th March of this year, CARICOM nations joined with the wider international community in commemorating the 200th Anniversary of the abolition of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in the British Empire. Prime Minister, H.E. Baldwin Spencer of Antigua and Barbuda – the incoming Chairman of the Group of 77 and China – aptly described this cruel and heinous period in world history in a message last March on the occasion of this seminal date, and I quote:

“From the 15th to the 19th Century an estimated 15 million black Africans were forcibly transported across the Atlantic Ocean. Millions perished from the weight of the chains that bounded them and the wretched and inhumane conditions of the slave ships. Those who survived faced yet another brutal fate, as they were auctioned off into slavery on plantations in South America, Central America, North America, and the Caribbean... Traders trafficked the sons and daughters (of Africa) across the Atlantic Ocean in the hulls of ships in some of the most inhumane conditions known to (humankind).” (End of quote).

As descendants of those forcibly displaced Africans, and of those many thousands dislocated from the Asian continent who suffered through the appalling hardships of indentured servitude, CARICOM joined with the nations of the world in Durban, South Africa in 2001 to lend our political will to the formal declaration of slavery as a crime against humanity. Accordingly, CARICOM reiterates the call for the speedy implementation of the *Durban Programme of Action*.

Mr. Chairman,

It is well documented that the Trans-Atlantic slave trade created significant economic wealth for those countries which benefited from it, as slavery was replaced by a variety of colonial models of governance. Many of the post-slavery dependency arrangements still persist today, and we repeat our call made in the Fourth Committee a few weeks ago for the ending of the anachronism of new millennium colonialism in our part of the African Diaspora. During the General Assembly Special Meeting last March 26 commemorating the abolition of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, The Prime Minister of St. Kitts and Nevis, H.E. Dr. Denzil Douglas, speaking on behalf of the CARICOM Heads of Government, reiterated that “amends and apologies into the realm of atonement

in the form of reparation” should be extended so that closure of this tragic period of history can be achieved. The CARICOM position remains firm on this question.

Mr. Chairman,

During Special Commemorative Meeting, CARICOM spoke of its intention to establish a Permanent Memorial to the victims of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade and slavery, to be prominently placed in the halls of the United Nations. We see this as an important tangible and unique contribution not only towards implementing the Durban Plan of Action to honour the memory of the victims but as an important step towards full acknowledgement of a tragedy that has been under-recognised and should never be forgotten, even after this 200th anniversary has passed.

We are extremely heartened by the support of several delegations to this initiative and grateful for contributions made so far to the voluntary fund opened towards this project. We anticipate the full cooperation of all Member States to this important initiative.

Mr. Chairman,

The trade in human beings and the resultant abhorrent conditions of slavery and indentureship ushered in, and systematically heightened, notions of racism and racial discrimination which still endure into the 21st century, and which are manifest in disturbing trends in this post Durban period, when it was hoped that racial tolerance and cultural diversity would have emerged as a dominant characteristic of human existence.

In this regard, recent ludicrous assertions of purported racial inferiority of Africans, espoused by one Nobel Prize winning scientist, are particularly objectionable. It is clear that economic and other inequalities experienced by Africans and their descendents have nothing to do with any so-called genetic deficiency, but are, rather, a function of the rape and pillage of the resources of the continent and its people. We are, therefore, pleased with the quick response of the *Federation of American Scientists* who dismissed these so-called ‘scientific’ findings of racial inferiority as “personal prejudices that are racist, vicious and unsupported by science.”

But this was not an isolated event. The disturbing re-introduction of the symbolism of a “noose,” used for summary executions of human beings in North America well into the 20th century is especially troubling as this conjures up a difficult period of racial strife characterised by persons being hung from trees until death, solely based on their race. Also disturbing is the emerging legitimisation of racist and xenophobic political parties, movements, and platforms, particularly in Europe, through the exploitation of the sensitive issues of identity and security. The success of some of these movements in gaining democratic legitimacy by joining coalition governments in some European countries is of real concern.

Mr. Chairman,

In view of these disturbing trends, it is clear that the international community has a difficult road ahead in addressing the challenges created by persistent racism, racial discrimination, and religious intolerance. In this connection, CARICOM supports the many initiatives underway to deal with these issues. We applaud the important work of the Special Rapporteur, Mr. Doudou Diene, on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. His 2007 report to the Human Rights Council drew particular attention to the resurgence of racist and xenophobic violence targeting members of ethnic, religious or cultural communities or national minorities; the criminalisation of and exclusively security-based approach to immigration; the general increase in the defamation of religions; the rejection of cultural diversity among communities; and the often violent manifestations of racism in sport.

CARICOM concurs with the important recommendations made by the Special Rapporteur for member states to reject racist and xenophobic political platforms, and the defamation of religion. We take specific note of the recommendation for member states to retain a careful balance between the defence of freedom of expression and respect for freedom of religion, with particular reference to the freedoms contained in the International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights. CARICOM further endorses the recommendation of the Special Rapporteur for the adoption of legal, political and administrative measures to ensure the observance and complementarity of the rights guaranteed under the relevant international legal instruments.

The participation of the Special Rapporteur in such activities as the thematic debate on racial profiling during the sixth session of the *Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent* held last January in Geneva, and in the high level panel on "*Racism and Racial Discrimination: Obstacles to Development*," held last March in Geneva, are but several important examples of the work that must be done in countering racism and racial discrimination.

CARICOM also wishes to acknowledge the work of the *Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*, particularly through its anti-discrimination unit, in the context of support for the effective implementation of the *Durban Programme of Action*. We further express our gratitude for the continuing work of the *Intergovernmental Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action* in examining the role of national action plans for eradicating racism and maximizing the benefits of diversity. Additionally, we are appreciative of the work of the Preparatory Committee for the important *Durban Review Conference* scheduled for 2009 and look forward to participating at the relevant levels to ensure the best possible outcome of this important review conference.

At the regional level, CARICOM takes note of the convening of the *Regional Conference of the Americas on Progress and Challenges in the Programme of Action against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance* held in Brasilia in 2006, and calls for a greater effort towards enhancing the participation of the

various sub-regions of the hemisphere and ensuring greater representation of its linguistic diversity at future conferences.

CARICOM is particularly pleased with the convening of the *African Diaspora Global Conference* held in Barbados last July, facilitated by the Government of South Africa on behalf of the *African Union*, as one of six regional consultations in the run up to the *African Diaspora Ministerial Conference* to be held this month. These regional consultations, which will culminate in a Summit in 2008, have the primary objective of institutionalising the links between Africa and the Caribbean through the mobilisation of intellectual, technical, business, social and political capacities for the development of Africa and the Caribbean.

Mr. Chairman,

CARICOM wishes to reiterate its support for these and other important initiatives at the national, regional and global levels aimed at removing the blight of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance from the face of the earth. To this end, it is imperative that the international community works together in this Assembly, in the Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, in the Human Rights Council and in other appropriate forums to foster the emergence of tolerance, peace and prosperity for the future of our world.

I thank you.