



Agenda item: 7

General Debate

Statement by:

Barbados



Statement by the Government of Barbados for the UNCTAD General Debate

Ambassador Matthew Wilson

Secretary General

Ministers

Ambassadors

Colleagues

We are living in troubling and uncertain times. And throughout this week, you will certainly hear many similar stories of concern from country representatives from all corners of this globe. You will hear concerns around the climate crisis. For countries like Barbados and other small island developing states this is existential, this is part of our lived experience, and addressing it is one of our greatest priorities.

You will hear about the beauty and the beast of technology and artificial intelligence, and the need for us to ensure that the analog divide does not transmute into an artificial intelligence divide; and that we can use artificial intelligence as a way to enhance and improve livelihoods for all.

You will hear concerns about non-tariff measures, unilateral measures and regulatory barriers that make it difficult for developing countries to be able to use trade as a source of growth and sustainable and inclusive development.

You will hear concerns about the impact of geopolitics and war on peace including in our region of the Caribbean Sea where we want to remain a zone of peace.

And you will certainly hear many shared concerns about the threats to multilateralism and the need for us to preserve and improve the work of the United Nations and its agencies and the World Trade Organization.

There will be many common threads.

My hope is that at the end of this week of discussions where we shall touch on everything from supply chains to digital issues to youth to trade to sustainable development to Gender that we will begin to find some pathways to enhance our collaboration and partnership as global citizens

to address some of these concerns with the aim of creating shared prosperity for all.

But we are also living at a time of the greatest ever human prosperity, innovation, and potential.

The task we must set for ourselves as a collective is to protect our global commons, place people over politics and ensure inclusive and sustainable growth for all. We have the resources. We have the brain power. We have the finances. We just need to want it enough.

As citizens of small Island developing states we live in the middle of all that is existential. The climate crisis, rising debt, geopolitics, and unpredictable supply chains. But through it all, we have a strong and pervasive belief in multilateralism and the power of collaboration.

This is why Barbados was the first small Island developing state to host an UNCTAD Ministerial- during the COVID pandemic no less- which led to a very successful outcome: the Bridgetown covenant.

I am pleased to see so much of what came out of that Barbados meeting permeating the discussion and potential outcome of this conference. It reaffirms its relevance but also compounds the reality that some issues are structural and demand long-term attention and long-term investment.

I must also remind that Barbados was the first country to host the UNCTAD Global Supply Chain Forum which was a direct ask from my Prime Minister Mia Mottley that UNCTAD pay closer attention to supply chain disruptions. We are pleased that this work will become part of UNCTAD's DNA moving forward.

Our commitment can also be seen through the Bridgetown initiative 3.0, which Barbados and many of our partners see as a blueprint for discussions around fairness especially around the reform of the international financial architecture and the accessibility of climate funds for the most climate vulnerable including through the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage.

It is also why Barbados is so deeply involved in discussions around the reform and the repositioning of the WTO. Through the WTO, we all have a seat at the table and the ability to influence and impact global trade rules, regulations standards, and perspectives, but we know that there is a need to improve and part of that will entail having a closer look at how we take decisions, how we honor the treaty mandated rights around special and differential treatment, and how allow the organization to align even more closely with the contemporary trade issues of today.

It is this cautious optimism that also characterizes our interaction with UNCTAD. Under Secretary General Grynspar's leadership we have seen a revitalized UN trade and development. The UNCTAD of today is more responsive, provides real time, analysis, data, and advice, and is one of the few spaces where countries and members of all levels of development and all perspectives can come together to discuss, to debate, to disagree, to discern and to decide.

In today's world of multilateral tensions the space provided by this organization is indispensable. We thank UNCTAD for its particular accent on small island developing states and we want to see more of this. We call on all of our partners to resource the SIDS trust fund and to work with us to develop meaningful and transformational interventions.

In closing, Barbados commends UNCTAD for its work and its commitment to trade led growth and development. This is not just an agency for developing countries. This is an agency that provides tools for all of us to raise our collective game. In today's world where unpredictability and

uncertainty is unfortunately the norm, we need organizations like UNCTAD that provide facts and thought leadership to enable all of us to think better, to do better and ultimately to be better.

Thank you.