

**Paper on the Topic**

**“Small, Middle and Emerging Powers in the United Nations System”  
A Caribbean Perspective**

**By**

**Ambassador Christopher Hackett**

**at the**

**22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting**

**of**

**The Academic Council on the United Nations System**

**University of the West Indies  
St. Augustine  
Trinidad and Tobago**

**June 5, 2009**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon to you all

Let me begin by thanking Ms. Bindley Taylor Sainte for her warm introduction. I would also like to thank the organizers of this annual meeting of ACUNS, particularly Professor Patricia Goff the Executive Director of the organization and Professor Timothy Shaw, the Director of the Institute of International Relations here at St. Augustine for their kind invitation.

I am particularly pleased to be able to return to the St. Augustine Campus of the University of the West Indies to participate in this 22<sup>nd</sup> annual meeting of the Academic Council on the United Nations System. I say return Madame Moderator, because several years ago, I was a student here at St. Augustine, at the Institute of International Relations; and although I have spent a long period of time living outside of the region, I have never the less followed closely the developments that have taken place over the last 30 years. More recently, during the last ten years much of my work has focused on the Caribbean, first, as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) official responsible for the organization's work in the Caribbean and for the last five years as my country's Permanent Representative to the United Nations at New York. I therefore

welcome this opportunity to make the linkage between the United Nations and Caribbean countries, particular those that are members of CARICOM.

The Conference theme of “Small, Middle and Emerging Powers in the United Nations System” is a most appropriate occasion for doing so, and in my presentation, I will provide a Caribbean perspective on this topic.

I will seek to demonstrate that the CARICOM countries at the United Nations, through their representatives both at New York and Geneva, have played a significant role in the development of several issues at the United Nations. Indeed, Caribbean countries have been able to exact favourable support from the international community on a number of issues of priority concern to them and other like-minded countries through methodical and effective consultations and negotiations in the United Nations General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and other United Nations fora like the World Trade Organization.

Madame Moderator,

We live in an increasingly globalized world. Action by one country, be it in the domain of rising food and energy prices, macro financial and economic policies

including trade development, climate change, migration and/or security related actions are sure to have impacts of varying scales on other countries.

This is a period in history more than ever, when a multilateralist approach is needed to facilitate a truly global response to the myriad and serious development and global challenges that we face today. There can be no room for division and discord in today's international response. Indeed, exclusive state sovereignty and territorial integrity are no longer the main guiding principles of today. Sovereignty and power must be exercised responsibly, and consultation and pragmatism need to replace unilateralism.

I would therefore like to suggest that the current challenges of today require a form of global governance in which large, medium and small states all have a role to play. I would also like to posit that Caribbean countries are well placed to play an important role in formulating appropriate responses to some of these global challenges.

In support of this thesis, let me briefly draw on a few examples that help to explain the role that Caribbean States have played at the United Nations over the past 20 years.

Caribbean countries first became members of the United Nations in the early 1960's beginning with Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago in 1962. These two Caribbean countries were not particularly active during the period of the 1960's and 1970's as it was normal for the maturing process of statehood to take root before they ventured out into major diplomatic forays. Their sporadic efforts were nevertheless helped by a strong multilateral approach to international relations at the time.

In the initial post cold war period the world experienced the beginnings of a redistribution of power including a period dominated by attempts at a unipolar world led by the United States of America that was taking place in the international system. It was then that we saw the early signs of a more active set of CARICOM countries who got involved, and in some cases actually led the way in the formulation of policies to address global issues. A case in point is the area of the environment and the decision of the United Nations to convene the Environment Conference of 1992 in which Jamaica played a key role. We all should recall that "Agenda 21" which emanated from that Rio Summit did provide the all embracing framework for the United Nations' work on sustainable development and a number of other related issues such as Biodiversity, Desertification, Climate Change, and

the focus on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) which was led by Barbados.

The initial post war period was followed by one of globalization, and a further increase in the redistribution of power, with the newly emerging powers of India, Brazil and South Africa being considered as important players on the world scene. This is when CARICOM countries have been most active at the United Nations. The onset of globalization certainly created both opportunities and risks for countries participating in the global economy. Indeed, under the right conditions, great benefits were derived by a number of countries from their more effective participation in global trade. However, globalization also brought with it a number of problems that few Governments can stop or control on their own. In the case of the small Caribbean countries their economies have encountered serious adjustment problems because of their small size in the emerging global trading regime. (e.g. the dismantling of the traditional sugar and banana export trade under the ACP-EU trade arrangement and the European Union Sugar Regime). An important need consequently developed for the integration of the concept of special and differential treatment (SDT) in the architecture of the multilateral trading system, to assist the small countries like those of the Caribbean in enhancing their competitiveness in international markets. This is where a number of CARICOM

countries at Geneva initiated and led the fight for the development and eventual acceptance of the concept of small vulnerable economies (SVEs)<sup>1</sup>.

Barbados was one of the three original proponents of the need for greater focus on the development challenges of small states with small and vulnerable economies (the other two countries being Mauritius and Lesotho). Later, a number of other Caribbean, Pacific and Central American countries joined the group and become the main protagonists (about 24 in all). Although much of the intellectual support originally came from UNCTAD and the Commonwealth Secretariat, the countries themselves represented a strong advocacy group that lobbied for the recognition of their concerns and special treatment within the World Trade Organization. This collectively helped to increase the understanding of the concerns of the SVEs. The Permanent Representative of Barbados to the United Nations at Geneva

---

<sup>1</sup> **Some of the characteristics associated with small and vulnerable countries include:**

- **Physical isolation and geographic distance to markets.**
- **Lack of adequate market access opportunities for export.**
- **Small domestic markets and diseconomies of scale.**
- **Low levels of production and competitiveness and**
- **Low levels of economic diversification.**

Ambassador Trevor Clarke was one of the earlier Chairmen of the group, and the staff of the Permanent Mission of Barbados at Geneva continues to act as a de facto secretariat.

The group has devised a structure of expert coordinators to ensure that the responsibility for the different areas of extreme importance was shared by a cross section of the SVEs proponents. Their efforts were successful in achieving and maintaining a high level of political support for their concerns. This was first evidenced by the World Trade Organization ministerial endorsement of a work programme on small economies at the outset of the Doha Round in 2001, which was followed up at the Hong Kong Ministerial Conference in 2005. Indeed, at that Second Conference, Ministers urged the adoption of specific measures that would facilitate the further integration of the Small Vulnerable Economies (SVEs) into the multilateral trading system.

Another concrete result of the advocacy work of the SVEs group is the delay of the full force of Article 3 of the Uruguay Round Subsidies Agreement to allow a number of countries to continue to use certain export subsidies initially until 2007 (with 2 phase out years to be added) which would normally be prohibited under the Subsidies and Countervailing Measures (SCM) process. The vast majority of

countries benefiting from this extension were SVEs. It should be noted however, that with further advocacy and consultations of this SVE group within the WTO, led by Barbados as Chair, an extension was given until 2015 with the understanding that there could be no further requests for extension.

I would argue that the impact of the advocacy work by this group of small states in Geneva has been an increased recognition of small economies and their particular concerns in the World Trade Organization, as well as in the wider global economy.

In addition to the work done at Geneva, CARICOM states have also pursued an active policy of development cooperation at the United Nations in New York. Thus you will find that most of the issues in which we have become deeply involved are development related. These include:

- The Environment and Sustainable Development
- Climate Change
- Financing for Development, particular the issue of financial services
- HIV/AIDS
- The Caribbean Sea
- Trade

- United Nations System-wide Coherence

I will not go into detail about many of these issues since I imagine that can be best left for the Q and A period that I understand is to follow. There is one issue however from among these on which I would like to make a few comments, and that is climate change given its importance for the survival of small states, particularly the island states of the Caribbean and the Pacific.

Madame Coordinator,

The threat of global climate change represents the most pressing and serious environment and development challenge confronting Small Island Developing States. While these countries have contributed least to this problem they are most affected by its adverse impact, such as sea-level rise and the increase in the frequency and intensity of hurricanes and other extreme weather events, and are least able to protect themselves.

A number of them, including those from the Caribbean have taken steps at the national and regional levels to develop and implement climate change strategies and plans, mostly using their own resources. However, the best of adaptation

strategies and plans at the local/national level will be meaningless, in the absence of decisive global action to significantly reduce harmful greenhouse gas emissions and comprehensively address climate change. This is why you will find that a number of small island states under the banner of the Alliance of Small island States (AOSIS) have been taking the lead in formulating the agenda for the negotiations leading up to the Climate Change Conference to be held in Copenhagen later this year (the so called Bali Road Map or Action Plan), and have been identifying some of the required responses for the way forward. We believe that the Bali Action Plan represents the best chance of crafting a political response to the overwhelming scientific evidence that the future of humanity hangs in the balance without urgent and ambitious global action to address climate change.

Madame Coordinator,

They were also other non-development issues such as the creation of the International Criminal Court in which the Government of Trinidad and Tobago took the lead with support from a number of other CARICOM countries.

CARICOM countries have also been actively involved in the debate on United Nations reform which has been of priority concern since the beginning of this

decade. Indeed, they have argued that the increasing demands on the United Nations and its system of organizations have aptly demonstrated that the existing structures are no longer fully suited to enable the organizations to respond adequately to the myriad global challenges. Thus the reform of the United Nations to enable it to confront the new realities, the new challenges and the new expectations is a continuing important task.

In this regard,

- Caribbean countries at the United Nations have supported the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission.
- They were directly involved in the negotiations that led to the final shape of the new Human Rights Council and a strengthened Economic and Social Council.
- They were critical members of a group that facilitated the decision of the General Assembly to begin intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform after almost fifteen years of informal consultations on the issue that were proving to be futile.
- They participate actively in the continuing debate to revitalize the United Nations General Assembly, and

- Acting as a facilitator of the General Assembly President, Barbados has been in the forefront of efforts to bring about a higher level of coherence within the United Nations System.

Madame Coordinator,

Despite this modest success that the small states of CARICOM have been achieving in international cooperation, an important dimension continues to elude them. I refer to their marginalization in the governance arrangements of a number of key international organizations, particularly in the financial area. The present response to the current financial and economic crisis demonstrates very clearly that the voices of those small countries that are being negatively impacted by the crisis also have to be taken into account. The current governance structure of the international financial system is simply too exclusive, limited and not sufficiently equipped to meet the requirements of a complex and interdependent global economy.

Far-reaching reforms of the international financial system and the international economic institutions charged with the responsibility of administering global

economic governance therefore needs to be accorded the highest international priority.

In closing, let me emphasize that none of the global challenges to which I have referred can be successfully addressed by one Member State acting on its own. Global problems require global solutions. The sheer complexity of the challenges confronting us, as well as the consequences of failure, provide the most immediate and compelling reason for a more effective multilateralism and the strengthening of global economic governance to ensure a greater voice for developing countries in policy making and norm setting.

Madame Coordinator,

Such events as this panel discussion can help to fill the void of understanding of what the United Nations can and cannot do, and the role that small states can and do play at the United Nations. I hope that this panel has provided you and the members of the audience with a special insight into some of the formidable challenges faced by Member States, particularly the small ones of the Caribbean, and how these small states have tried to get the United Nations to assist them in addressing many of these challenges.

Organizations like ACUNS are important for conducting and facilitating such debates as this one on the relevance of the United Nations and the role that small states can play in its work. ACUNS brings together a group of academics, journalists and individual foreign policy practitioners who have an interest in global concerns. Through your engagement, many of today's global challenges can be addressed and solutions for effective responses identified.

I therefore hope that through the teaching and research of your respective academic institutions, you will contribute to the empowering of the United Nations in helping it to realize its full potential where all Member States, big, small and emerging powers can play their respective roles in the different organizations of the United Nations system.